■ Motoring / C1

Starting 'em young in karting

■ Talk of the Town / A14

Voters view presidential platforms

■ Business / B1

Stocks hit 3-month low on economy woes

■ World / A10

Bush warned of al-Qaida terror plans

Tanong ng Bayan / A20

Mga political dynasty: Oras nang ipagbawal?

NGAYONG ALAS-10 NG GABI

Lacson leaves Bulgari scent on campaign trail

By Norman Bordadora

LIKE a lover, Sen. Panfilo Lacson sprays on his favorite scent before setting out to press flesh.

"I make it a point that I am clean and neatly dressed. I definitely put on a lot of cologne, for how can you go a-courting when you

LACSON/ A17

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Mobile phone credits could be as good as cash

By Clarissa S. Batino
Business

PATI SUKLI PWEDE NANG MA-LOAD

NO cash to tip the waiter, or pay for your bus fare?

Why not use your mobile phone credit to settle some of your bills?

MOBILE/ A4

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Thursday, March 25, 2004 ★★ 52 pages / 6 sections / vol. 19 / no. 108 P18

website: www.inq7.net

GMA to pursue gov't takeover of Maynilad

'No court case shall deter us from goal'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana, Michael Lim Ubac and Philip C. Tubeza

NOTHING can stop her from pursuing the government takeover of Maynilad Water Services from the Lopezes, President Macapagal-Arroyo declared yesterday.

"We are determined to ensure that people have clean water at reasonable cost. No court case shall deter us from this goal," she said.

The President issued the statement a day after a senatorial candidate of the Alyansa ng Pag-asa filed graft charges against her before the Office of the Ombudsman.

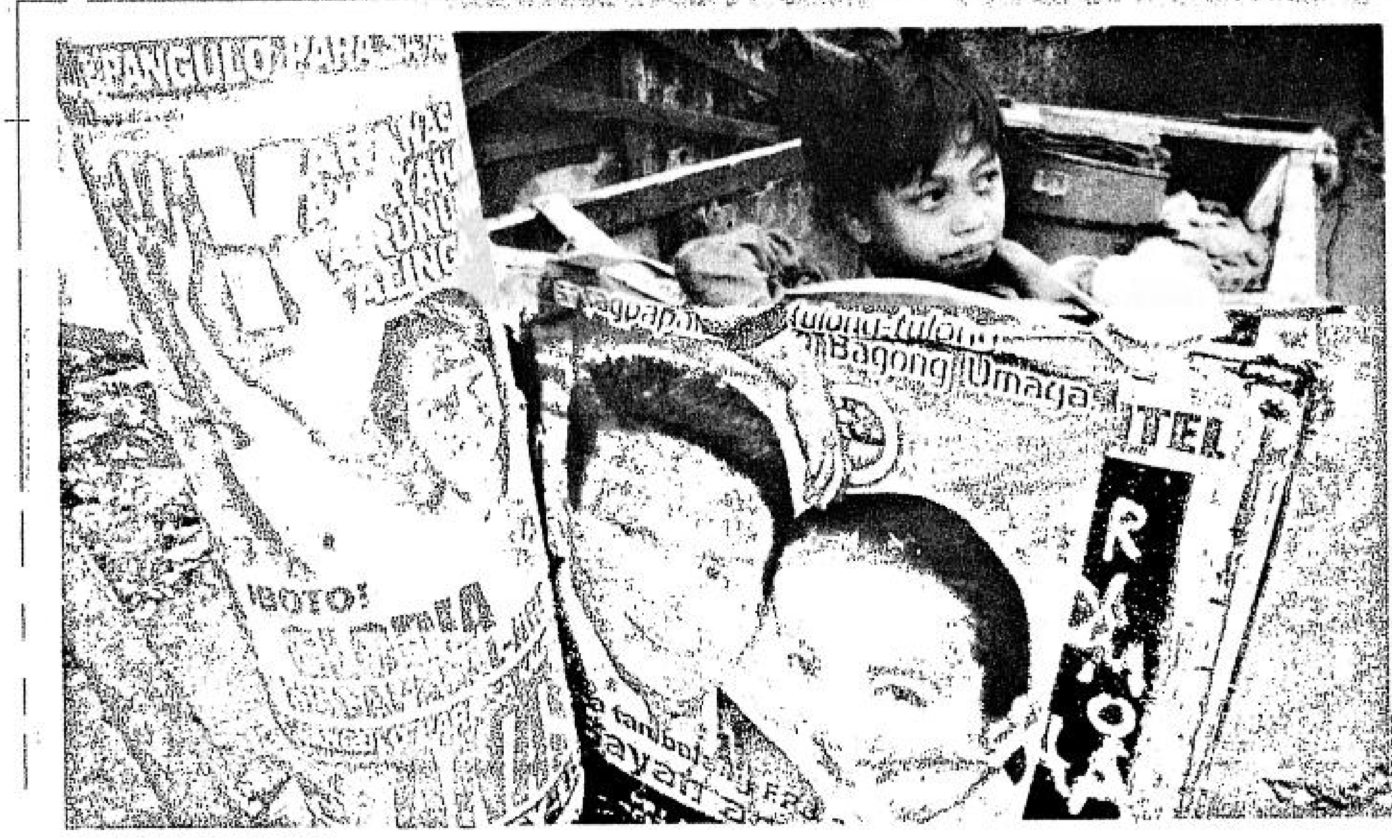
Candidate Melanio "Batas" Mauricio Jr. claimed that Ms Macapagal caused the government "undue injury" and gave Maynilad "unwarranted benefits" in the P8-billion "bailout" of the water utility.

Not content with the filing of charges against the President, Mauricio yesterday sought to stop the government takeover of the water utility by asking Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo to immediately issue an injunction order.

"It is most respectfully submitted that the issuance of an order stopping the takeover of Maynilad by the government will 'protect and preserve' the right of the complainant as a taxpayer who will eventually shoulder the expenses for the said takeover," Mauricio said in a motion he filed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

But Ms Macapagal said clean water for Filipinos was a "non-ne-

GMA/ A17



BETWEEN PROMISES
Fernand Cunanan, 6, who calls this cart home along with his parents who salvage scraps for a living, including political posters, cannot yet vote either for the promise of the incumbent or the dawning of a new morning. But would the choice finally make a difference in his life?

Scramble for 17,000 local posts starts today

By Martin P. Marfil and Christian V. Esguerra

WITH THREATS of violence looming in the background, tens of thousands of candidates officially launch their campaign today for more than 17,000 local posts.

And as the political scramble at the provincial and municipal levels start, police also begin their "Baklas (Dismantle) Operation."

The Commission on Elections yesterday said it feared the level of violence would increase because of fierce rivalries among local candidates.

"Yes," Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said, when asked if he expected poll-related violence to rise. "The rivalry is more intense in the local, not in the national level."

Abalos said he planned to go to Mindanao—a perennial flashpoint during elections—on Friday to talk with local candidates.

He said the ban against deadly weapons would be strictly enforced and police units had been ordered to be more vigilant.

"I will be there. I will see [to it] that this [the campaign against loose firearms] is strictly enforced," he said.

At least 47 people, including six politicians, have been killed and 110 injured since the election season began in December.

The communist New People's Army (NPA) is the biggest worry of the Philippine National Police.

PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. yesterday ordered all police units to intensify checkpoint and intelligence operations to prevent more cases of election-related violence and keep the NPA at bay.

Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, PNP spokesperson, said the NPA was

SCRAMBLE/ A17

FPJ security now has decoys, undercover men

By Carlito Pablo

MARILAO, Bulacan—If Fernando Poe Jr.'s handlers are resorting to decoys, that means they're not taking the supposed threat on his life lightly.

In the town of Meycauayan where the convoy of the presidential candidate popularly known as FPJ was scheduled to start yesterday morning, three four-wheel-drive vehicles drove into the parking lot of a shopping area where Poe's close-in security men were earlier seen milling.

As the vehicles were driving in, security men inside made motions of alighting as though preparing to secure an important person who was to debark.

The townsfolk predictably crowded closer, and the three vehicles slowly drove away.

It wasn't the standard-bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino in one of the vehicles but

FPJ SECURITY/ A17

Roco says poor left out in businessmen's agenda

By TJ Burgonio

THE AGENDA'S brilliant, but something's missing.

Presidential candidate Raul Roco on Tuesday night chided some of the country's top business executives for their failure to factor in the "poor's participation" as a key element in governance in their presidential business agenda.

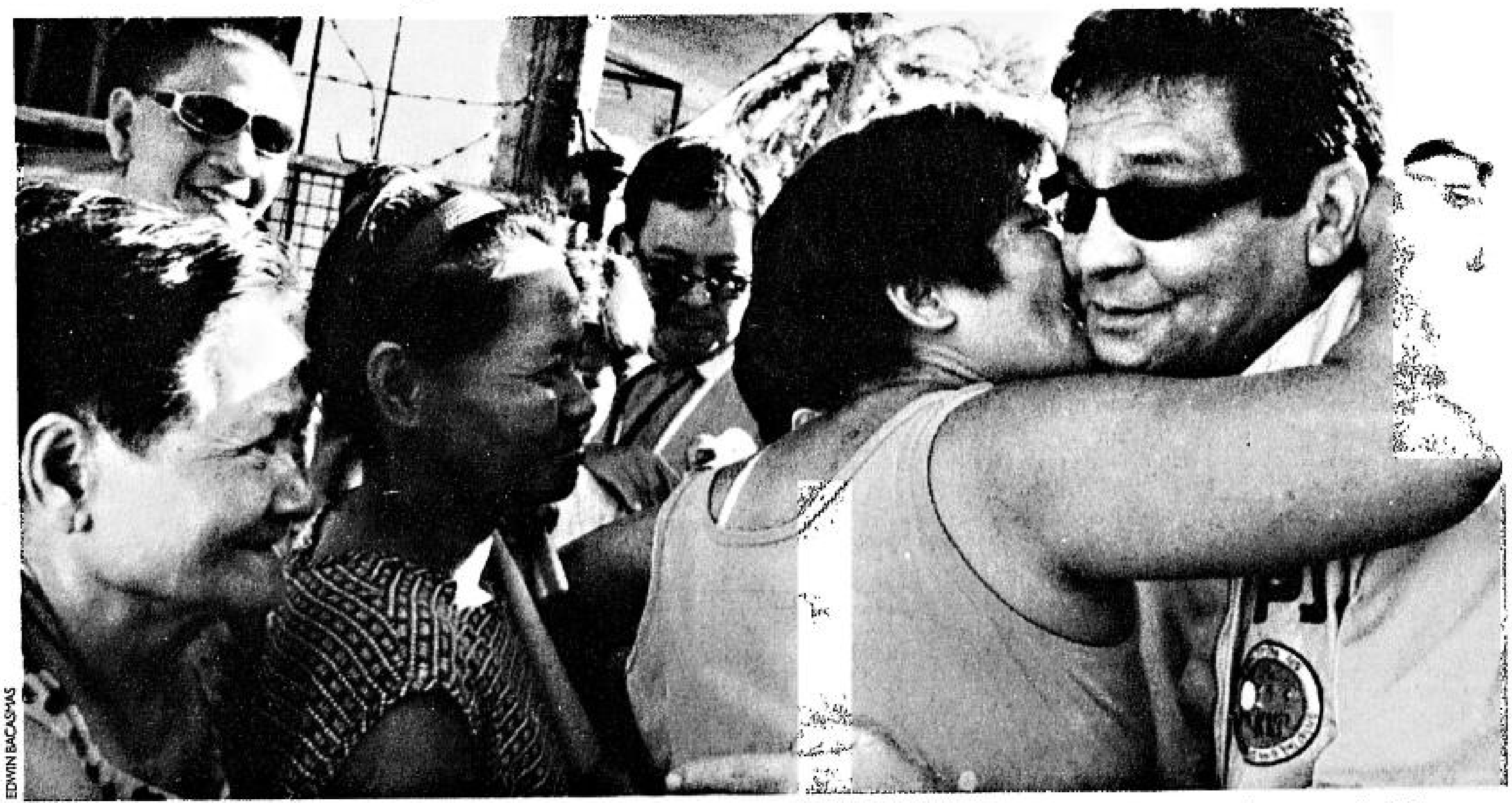
The Alyansa ng Pag-asa standard-bearer was presented a copy of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry's "First 100-Day Agenda" in Makati City, but he ended up giving a lecture on its shortcomings and "boxed solutions" to problems.

The agenda, which was drafted by the PCCI Council of Business Leaders, spells out the group's proposals to address the country's financial, economic and social problems.

Roco, clad in a dark blue *barong*, said he agreed with almost all of the business group's "well-planned" prescriptions, except for one thing—the prescriptions represented the perspective of the ruling elite, which he said was a "weakness by itself."

ROCO/ A4

THE CHARM OFFENSIVE ELECTION 2004



LUBAO, PAMPANGA: Not exactly the Viva Hot Babes, the women in Macapagal country line up for the chance to throw themselves all over a startled FPJ.

Pandemonium, gimmicks, that's entertainment

Editor's Note: The INQUIRER *continues a series of essays on the campaign style and impact of the five presidential candidates, a two-parter for each in alphabetical order.*

By Emmie G. Velarde
Desk Editor

(First of two parts)

NO THREE-MINUTE limit tonight. The 12 senatorial candidates can talk as much as they want because Fernando Poe Jr. will take another hour to get here.

This is the word from the director of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino's (KNP) grand rally in Legazpi City, in front of the LCC commercial center on Quezon Avenue. The building is surrounded by jeepney terminals and sidewalk stalls, making it, theoretically, FPJ territory—even in the heart of Bicolandia, which is perceived to be (Raul) Roco country.

And yes, that is a "director," as in, show biz.

PANDEMONIUM/ A18

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Extreme Northern and Eastern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers or thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY, RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/03/25/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

Mega Pacific duns Comelec for P200M

By Martin P. Marfil

DESPITE a Supreme Court decision and a government demand for it to return the P1.03 billion paid for automated counting machines intended for the May elections, the Mega Pacific Solutions consortium still wants to get P200 million more representing the balance of the contract.

Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos said Mega Pacific had sent the Comelec a demand letter to pay the balance. "They said it was not their fault that we were not able to use the machines, but we said we're sorry we can't pay any additional amount and hope they are guided by the decision of the Supreme Court," the Comelec chief said.

The P200 million balance was supposed to be paid after the elections.

But Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo yesterday said the government would sue Mega Pacific if it does not pay the P1.03 billion it owes the government for the aborted deal.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, on the other hand, assured the public that the P1 billion advances made by the Comelec to the MegaPacific consortium would not be "money down the drain."

"We assure the people that this is not money down the drain. We will fight with all lawful means to recover it and protect the public interest," she said.

Mega Pacific lawyer Alfredo Lazaro Jr. said on Tuesday that it does not owe anything as it had delivered the counting machines which were tested "under brutal conditions."

"The Supreme Court nullified the contract and ordered that the government be reimbursed. We will file a civil action suit if they do not pay. It's that simple," Benipayo said.

Voided

The deal was earlier voided by the tribunal which also ordered the government to recover the money paid to the firm, then amounting to P850 million.

Abalos said they released funds to the firm after the delivery, the testing of the machines and the certifications of each accuracy test which were all in the compliance with the contract's provisions.

In its ruling voiding the automated polls deal, the high court said the Comelec "put at grave risk the holding of credible and peaceful elections by shoddily accepting electronic hardware and software that admittedly failed to pass legally mandated technical requirements."

The court also told the Comelec "to refrain from implementing any other contract or agreement entered into" with regard to the Mega Pacific project.

Futhermore, the Comelec must bear full responsibility for the failed bidding and award, and held accountable for the electoral mess wrought by their grave abuse of discretion in the performance of their functions, it added.

Benipayo said his office is also investigating if Mega Pacific is still "solvent" or if it is just a "shell" company. He said the OSG sent letters to the Mega Pacific office along Ayala Avenue in Makati—the address it gave in the contract—but did not get a response. Benipayo added that he also sent his men to this office twice but found nobody there from the company.

'Not our fault'

Lazaro received a copy of the demand letter after the OSG sent it to his law office, added Benipayo. Lazaro claims the Mega Pacific office is at the Tektite Towers in Pasig City.

He added that the Mega Pacific had received the OSG's demand letter, and that his client was preparing its response. Lazaro said, however, that the demand for a refund, was "offline" since the government is "not capable of restoring the machines to its virgin state."

"We are not at fault," Lazaro said. "We performed our end of the deal in good faith and delivered the machines based on Comelec specifications. Hence, we should not be made to suffer financially."

Benipayo said that the OSG's action is different from the Ombudsman's investigation on the culpability of Comelec officials and private individuals involved in the project. He said his office would send the necessary documents to the Ombudsman to help it in its investigation.

Yesterday, the Comelec announced that it would implement a "quick count" operation which will feature the use of satellite transmission facilities called Very Small Aperture Terminals or VSATs.

The operation will cost the government another P298 million and had been justified earlier as a deterrent against any attempt at cheating like slow counts and *dagdag-bawas* or vote shaving. ***With Philip C. Tubeza and Gil Cabacungan Jr.***

John O to open probe of Maynilad 'sweetheart deal'

By Christine O. Avendaño

HE MAY be seeking reelection under the administration coalition but Sen. John Osmeña is ready to open a Senate inquiry into allegations that Malacañang had entered into a "sweetheart deal" with the Lopez family to save the debt-strapped Maynilad Water Services.

Osmeña said he was not bothered about leading such an investigation despite being an administration candidate.

"I think, as part of my job in the Senate, if my examination of the papers that we want to look at will show that there are areas which should be examined in aid of legislation, I will proceed," he said.

Osmeña said the Senate committee on government corporations that he heads may start the probe by next week, noting that the K-4 coalition's election campaign would be concentrated in the National Capital Region for the next two weeks.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said, however, Osmeña cannot conduct such an investigation without a resolution having been filed and referred to his committee before Congress took a break last month.

Resolution

Drilon said he was not aware of any resolution related to Maynilad that was filed and referred to the Senate before Congress closed for the election recess.

"The rule is, the committee cannot conduct an investigation if Congress is not in session unless there is an existing resolution which was filed and referred to [Osmeña's] committee," he said.

In a news conference, Osmeña said that aside from the Maynilad issue, his committee might touch on the controversy involving the bidding of a $20-million contract to expand the Light Railway Transit.

Opposition senatorial bet Francisco Tatad has alleged that a group identified with Malacañang had extorted $3 million from three Japanese firms bidding for the LRT expansion project.

Osmeña said among the issues that would be clarified in the Senate hearing was a question on his mind: "What is really the agreement between the government and Maynilad?"

He said he did not intend to summon Sen. Noli de Castro, President Macapagal-Arroyo's vice-presidential running mate, because the inquiry would just focus on the legalities and not on political speculation linking De Castro to the alleged midnight deal.

The opposition claimed that the alleged Maynilad "bail-out" and De Castro's team-up with the President in the May polls were part of a deal between Malacañang and the Lopez family, majority owner of Maynilad. De Castro is a broadcast talent at the Lopez-owned ABS-CBN television network.

Osmeña also castigated Alyansa ng Pag-asa senatorial candidate Melanio "Batas" Mauricio who filed a graft case against the President for allegedly causing undue injury to the government in the P8 billion Maynilad bail-out.

"Either he does not know his law or he is just looking for publicity," Osmeña said of Mauricio.

No case

The senator said that one cannot file a case against a sitting President. Congress has first to impeach the President first before a case can be filed.

"These people are just seeking publicity," Osmeña said.

Drilon also defended the President, saying that he saw a "clear pattern of political harassment" against Ms Macapagal by the opposition.

Drilon said the opposition has so far filed three "unfounded" suits against the President, which included her allegedly exceeding the allowed political advertising time and her alleged use of government funds for her election campaign.

"We wish that the opposition would present their program of government and stop all this mudslinging," said Drilon, who chairs the Liberty Party that is in coalition with the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats for the May polls.

Drilon said the deal with Maynilad might not even push through because the matter was now in the courts.

He said the court should scrutinize the deal "very carefully" because of allegations that it was a "midnight deal."

"The public deserves no less than a close judicial scrutiny. If this is really a midnight deal favoring the Lopezes, then it should be trashed," the Senate President said.

GMA calls Tacloban reconciliation center; Imelda does not agree

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—A center of reconciliation.

This was how President Macapagal-Arroyo described Tacloban City during Tuesday's groundbreaking ceremony of the Tacloban Astrodome, where the President shared the limelight with former First Lady Imelda Marcos and her brothers Mayor Alfredo "Bejo" Romualdez and former ambassador and governor Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez.

"I am happy to say that Tacloban is not only a city of progress and development as evidenced by the big projects undertaken by Mayor Alfredo "Bejo" Romualdez Sr., but also a center of reconciliation of our country," Ms Macapagal told a big crowd in the proposed site of the astrodome and commercial center in Sagkahan District of this city.

"*Sana'y magtuluy-tuloy na ito* (I wish this will continue) so we can move on a century of progress for Tacloban, for Leyte and for the whole Philippines," the President said.

The P15-million astrodome is a pet project of Mayor Romualdez, who recently joined the administration's Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats. It has a seating capacity of 4,200 and will be built using the savings of the city.

In an interview with the INQUIRER, Marcos said she hoped the President's declaration was true.

"I pray 100 percent that it was true and not just a political gimmick," Marcos said, noting that the President made the statement while she was seeking a full-term in this year's elections.

The Marcoses still have a number of followers in the Ilocos and Eastern Visayas, which are considered "Marcos countries."

The former first lady, who, along with her family is facing a string of ill-gotten wealth cases filed by the Presidential Commission on Good Government, said true reconciliation could only be achieved if the government will stop "depriving" them of their rights.

Ms Macapagal welcomed Mayor Romualdez to the Lakas-CMD, saying his entry only meant that he believed in her administration and that she had something good to offer to the Filipino people.

In a news conference at the legislative building of Carigara town, Leyte, the President denied that deals were made in exchange for the mayor's support for her presidential bid.

"*Sa aking administrasyon lamang nanalo ang gobyerno sa mga* Marcos (ill-gotten) wealth na *ang tagal-tagal na hindi nare*-resolve (It is only during my administration that the government won the cases against the Marcoses, which had long been unresolved) So how can you say that there was a political deal?" she told the INQUIRER.

Mayor Romualdez earlier said he decided to back Ms Macapagal because she was not only the "most industrious" but also the "most qualified" among the presidential candidates.

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Justice
BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION
Intramuros, Manila

March 10, 2004

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. AFF-04-01

RULES GOVERNING PHILIPPINE CITIZENSHIP UNDER REPUBLIC ACT (R.A.) NO. 9225 AND ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER (A.O.) NO. 91, SERIES OF 2004

WHEREAS, R.A. No. 9225 declares that natural-born citizens of the Philippines who become citizens of another country shall be deemed not to have lost their Philippine citizenship under conditions provided therein;

WHEREAS, A.O. No. 91, Section 1 designates the Bureau of Immigration (BI), in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of the Civil Registrar-General, National Statistics Office (NSO), as the implementing agency of R.A. No. 9225;

WHEREAS, R.A. No. 91, Section 2 authorizes the BI to promulgate and issue rules and regulations to implement R.A. No. 9225;

WHEREFORE, by authority of A.O. No. 91 Section 2 in relation to Commonwealth Act No. 613, Section 3, as amended, the following rules are hereby adopted to carry out the provisions of R.A. No. 9225.

*Section 1. **Coverage.*** – These rules shall apply to former natural-born citizens of the Philippines, as defined by Philippine law and jurisprudence, who have lost their Philippine citizenship by reason of their naturalization as citizens of a foreign country.

*Section 2. **Former natural-born Philippine citizen already in the Philippines and a BI-registered alien*** – A former natural-born citizen of the Philippines who is already in the Philippines and registered in the BI shall file a petition under oath to the Commissioner of Immigration for the cancellation of Alien Certificate of Registration (ACR) and issuance of an Identification Certificate (IC), as the case may be, under R.A. No. 9225.

*Section 3. **Former natural-born Philippine citizen who is abroad but a BI-registered alien*** – A former natural born citizen of the Philippines who is abroad but is a BI-registered alien shall file a petition under oath to the nearest Philippine Foreign Post for evaluation. Threafter, It shall forward the entire records to the Commissioner of Immigration for the cancellation of Alien Certificate of Registration (ACR) and issuance of an IC under R.A. No. 9225.

*Section 4. **Former natural-born Philippine citizen already in the Philippines and not a BI-registered alien*** – A former natural-born citizen of the Philippines who is already in the Philippines but has not registered with the BI within sixty (60) days from date of his arrival shall file a petition under oath to the Commissioner of Immigration for the issuance of an IC under R.A. No. 9225.

*Section 5. **Former natural-born Philippine citizen who is abroad and not a BI-registered alien*** – A former natural-born citizen of the Philippines who is abroad and is not a BI-registered alien shall file a petition under oath to the nearest Philippine Foreign Post for the issuance of an IC under R.A. 9225.

*Section 6. **Forwarding address. Photographs.*** – In all petitions under Sections 2 to 5 hereof, the applicant must indicate his or her latest forwarding address. Three (3) recent 2" x 2" photographs of the applicant (front, left side, and right side views over white background) shall be attached to the petition.

*Section 7. **Fees.*** – Each applicant under these Rules shall pay a one-time fee for the processing of the application and issuance of the corresponding IC.

Applicants already in the Philippines shall attach the official receipt for the amount of P2,500.00 as proof of payment of processing fee. Applicants who are abroad shall attach the official receipt for the amount of US$50 or its equivalent in foreign currency acceptable to the Philippine Foreign Post concerned.

*Section 8. **Proof as natural-born citizen of the Philippines.*** – A former natural-born citizen of the Philippines, who was born in the Philippines, shall submit the NSO-authenticated copy of his or her birth certificate.

On the other hand, a former natural-born citizen of the Philippines, who was born abroad, shall submit the original copy of the Report of Birth issued by the Philippine Foreign Post and in applicable cases, the Birth Certificate issued by competent foreign authorities.

These documents shall be sufficient to establish that the applicant is a natural-born citizen of the Philippines for purposes of these Rules.

*Section 9. **Submission of the Oath of Allegiance*** – Applicants under these Rules shall also sign and attach an Oath of Allegiance to the Republic of the Philippines as follows:

> *I (name of the applicant) solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines and obey the laws and local orders promulgated by the duly constituted authorities of the Philippines, and I hereby declare that I recognize and accept the supreme authority of the Philippines and will maintain true faith and allegiance thereto, and that I impose this obligation upon myself voluntarily without mental reservation or purpose of evasion.*

*Section 10. **Strict compliance. Effect of non-compliance.*** – All petitions must strictly comply with the preceding requirements prior to filing at the Office of the Commissioner or at the nearest Philippine Foreign Post, as the case may be. After the filing of the petition, the same shall be assigned to an evaluating officer who shall evaluate the petition without further proceedings.

In the case of petitions that do not comply with the requirements, the applicant shall be notified to submit the required documents within thirty (30) days from receipt thereof. Otherwise, the petition shall not be favorably acted upon by the Bureau of Immigration or by the Philippine Foreign Post.

If after evaluation, the documents submitted fail to establish that the applicant is a natural-born citizen of the Philippines, the applicant shall be notified of such fact in writing by the Commissioner of Immigration or by the Philippine Foreign Post.

*Section 11. **Approval Procedures.*** If the petition is found to be sufficient in form and in substance, the evaluating officer shall submit the findings and recommendation to the Commissioner of Immigration or Consul-General, as the case may be, within five (5) days from date of assignment.

For applications filed under Sections 2 and 4 of these Rules, the Commissioner of Immigration shall issue, within five (5) days from receipt thereof, an Order of Approval indicating that the petition complies with the provisions of R.A. No. 9225 and its IRR, and further direct the Chief of the Alien Registration Division (ARD) to cancel the subject ACR and/or to issue the corresponding IC to the applicant. Each cancelled ACR shall, however, be attached to the Order of Approval to form part of the records of the applicant.

For applications filed under Sections 3 and 5 of these Rules, the Consul-General shall issue, within five (5) days from receipt thereof, the Order of Approval indicating that the petition complies with the provisions of R.A. No. 9225 and its IRR. He shall then transmit copies of the Order of Approval, Oath of Allegiance, including the authenticated Record of Birth or Birth Certificate to the BI. Immediately upon receipt thereof, the BI shall issue the corresponding IC to the applicant and forward the same to the Philippine Foreign Post concerned. If the applicant is a BI-registered alien, the BI shall also cancel the subject ACR.

*Section 12. **Conferment of Philippine citizenship. Conditions.*** – Subject to full compliance with these Rules, the Oath of Allegiance shall be the final act that confers Philippine citizenship.

In case the applicant is in the Philippines, he may take his Oath of Allegiance before the Commissioner of Immigration or any officer authorized under existing laws to administer oath. In the latter case, the applicant must submit the Oath of Allegiance to the BI to form part of his records.

In case the applicant is abroad, only the Consul General or a duly commissioned foreign service officer of the Philippine Foreign Post concerned shall administer the Oath of Allegiance.

The Oath of Allegiance shall thereafter be registered in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Registry laws.

*Section 13. **Repository of Records.*** – The BI Records Section shall maintain the integrity of all the documents filed under these Rules. It shall send official copies of the Order of Approval and Oath of Allegiance to the NSO.

*Section 14. **Copies for the Applicant. Identification Certificate. Correction of errors.*** – The applicant shall be provided with an official copies of the Order of Approval and the Oath of Allegiance. Further, all IC's issued under these Rules shall indicate Philippine citizenship under R.A. No. 9225 and A.O. No. 91, s. 2004. Any clerical error or errors in the entries of the IC may be corrected, upon written request to and approval by the Commissioner of Immigration. The NSO shall be promptly provided with a copy of the corrected IC.

*Section 15. **Confidentiality of Records.*** – Any application, document or information given before the Bureau of Immigration or any Philippine Foreign Post shall not be divulged in any manner to any person or entity without the express written consent of the person to whom such application, record or information belongs.

*Section 16. **Other beneficiaries of R.A. No. 9225.*** – This memorandum circular shall equally apply to the unmarried child, whether legitimate, illegitimate or adopted, below eighteen (18) years of age, of those who re-acquire Philippine citizenship upon the effectivity of R.A. 9225.

*Section 17. **Exemption from administrative review. Limitations.*** – The conferment of the Philippine citizenship under these Rules shall no longer be subject to the affirmation by the Secretary of Justice pursuant to DOJ Policy Directive of 7 September 1970 and Opinion No. 108, s. 1996.

However, Philippine citizenship under these Rules may be revoked by competent authority upon a substantive finding of fraud, misrepresentation or concealment on the part of the applicant.

*Section 18. **Effectivity.*** – This memorandum circular takes effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

ALIPIO F. FERNANDEZ, JR.
Commissioner

APPROVED:

MA. MERCEDITAS N. GUTIERREZ
Acting Secretary
Department of Justice

PDI - March 18 & 25, 2004

ABS-CBN won't run Enrile's anti-Meralco commercials

By Jerry Esplanada

DELETE the "Meralco electric bill" scene and we'll run your TV commercial.

This was more or less the condition given by the ABS-CBN television network after it rejected a political advertisement of Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino senatorial candidate Juan Ponce Enrile, also a staunch critic of Meralco.

ABS-CBN and the Manila Electric Co. are sister companies. They, among other firms, belong to the Lopez family.

Airing Enrile's "power price adjustment" TV commercial would be "sub judice," this is according to ABS-CBN's chief legal counsel Andrefanio Santos, as quoted by the senator's staff.

Enrile brushed aside Santos' explanation: "Tell that to the Marines!" he told lawyers of the giant network.

"If it's sub judice, how come GMA-7 accepted the same commercial and has been airing it four to five times a day," Enrile told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Edited version

ABS-CBN "wanted to censor my TV commercial. They said they would only run an edited version of my political advertisement which touched on the PPA, the one featuring a Meralco bill," according to Enrile.

"They want us to delete that portion showing the electric bill...and replace it with what—a water bill?" Enrile said.

"No way," said the KNP senatorial bet, stressing "there's nothing wrong with my PPA commercial. We're not discussing the merits of the (PPA) case, so what sub judice are they talking about?" Enrile pointed out.

The consumer protection advocacy group Philippine Consumer Watch, which is headed by Enrile, had earlier questioned before a Pasig City court the constitutionality of Republic Act 9136, otherwise known as the "Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001."

Framework

RA 9136 was intended to "provide a framework for the restructuring of the electric power industry, including the privatization of the assets of the National Power Corp., the transition to the desired competitive structure and the definition of the responsibilities of the various government and private entities."

The case is now pending with the Court of Appeals.

According to Enrile, "PPA is a legitimate public issue. It has been the subject of discussions for quite some time in the airwaves, also in the newspapers."

Santos has told lawyer Gigi Reyes, a member of the ex-senator's legal team, "*Para walang gulo* (To avoid trouble), we'll reject the (PPA) ad."

Reyes also quoted Santos as having told her, "*Parang binaril namin ang sarili namin* (It's like shooting ourselves if we had allowed the airing of Enrile's PPA commercial)."

When contacted, Ma. Lourdes Manalastas, ABS-CBN vice president for government, corporate affairs and public relations, said Enrile's two other advertisements—both of which concerned overseas Filipino workers—were accommodated by the network.

According to Manalastas, "Sometime in February, Creative Concepts, the ad agency representing (Enrile) made an informal inquiry with ABS-CBN as to the airing of political advertisements that touched on the issue of the PPA."

"ABS-CBN replied, also informally, that it has serious concerns in as much as matters which are the subject of a judicial action may be sub judice," she said in a statement sent to the INQUIRER.

Reyes said they had "given up on the PPA ad." She recalled that in 2001 Enrile also had a "sad experience" with ABS-CBN.

The TV station "failed to air about P1-million worth of political advertisements placed by Senator Enrile, prompting the network to reimburse the senator. They issued him a check right after that year's election," Reyes said.

Overcharge

Late last year, Enrile disclosed that Meralco had been overcharging its consumers more than P7 billion annually through a three-pronged scheme being sanctioned by the Energy Regulatory Commission.

He assailed the ERC for allegedly turning a blind eye on the overcharging by Meralco of at least P640 million in power charges in 50 franchise areas in Luzon, including Metro Manila.

In a statement, Enrile said based on admission by then ERC chair Manuel Sanchez, Napocor charged Meralco only P2.15 per kwh but based on computations, Meralco's independent power suppliers are charging P4.88 per kwh.

Enrile has repeatedly asked electricity consumers to continue the fight against the alleged corporate crimes of Meralco.

The former senator also urged the government to look into the power firm's other transgressions against consumers.

ERC hit over Meralco rate hike

By Abigail L. Ho

A CONSUMER group has accused the Energy Regulatory Commission of allowing the Manila Electric Co. to cut by half a mandated reduction of electricity rates, resulting in a "camouflaged" approval of a rate increase for the distribution utility which is owned by the influential Lopez family.

The People Opposed to Warrantless Electricity Rates (Power) said the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira) had ordered a reduction of 30 centavos per kWh for Meralco customers.

However, starting with the February billing cycle, the 30-centavo per kWh reduction had gone down to 15.48 centavos per kWh, said Power convenor Renato Reyes Jr.

This resulted in a "camouflaged rate hike" of 14.52 centavos per kWh, he said.

"For people who consumed 261 kWh, the discount is now only P40.40 from the previous P78.30. That's practically a P37.90 increase in their monthly bills. As far as we know, there have been no public announcements by the government concerning this issue. The reduction of discounts effectively translates into another rate increase for consumers," he said.

Section 72 of the Epira mandates that residential customers be given a rate reduction of 30 centavos per kWh from the rates charged by the state-run National Power Corp. This is reflected as a separate item in the monthly electricity bill.

This provision in the Epira was "one of the sweeteners that the Arroyo administration employed for the swift passage of the Epira in Congress," said Reyes.

But now it has been drastically slashed without the public even being informed about it, he said.

Ivanna de la Peña, head of utility economics for Meralco, explained that Meralco was merely following what the law mandated—that a 30-centavo per kWh discount be applied to electricity sourced from Napocor.

She said the Epira provision did not cover electricity sourced from independent power producers (IPPs).

Meralco sources only 50 percent of its power supply from Napocor, getting the balance of its requirements from Lopez Group-owned IPPs, First Gas Power Corp. and Quezon Power.

If Meralco were to follow what the law stated, De la Peña said the discount would be applied only to electricity sourced from Napocor, not to that from IPPS.

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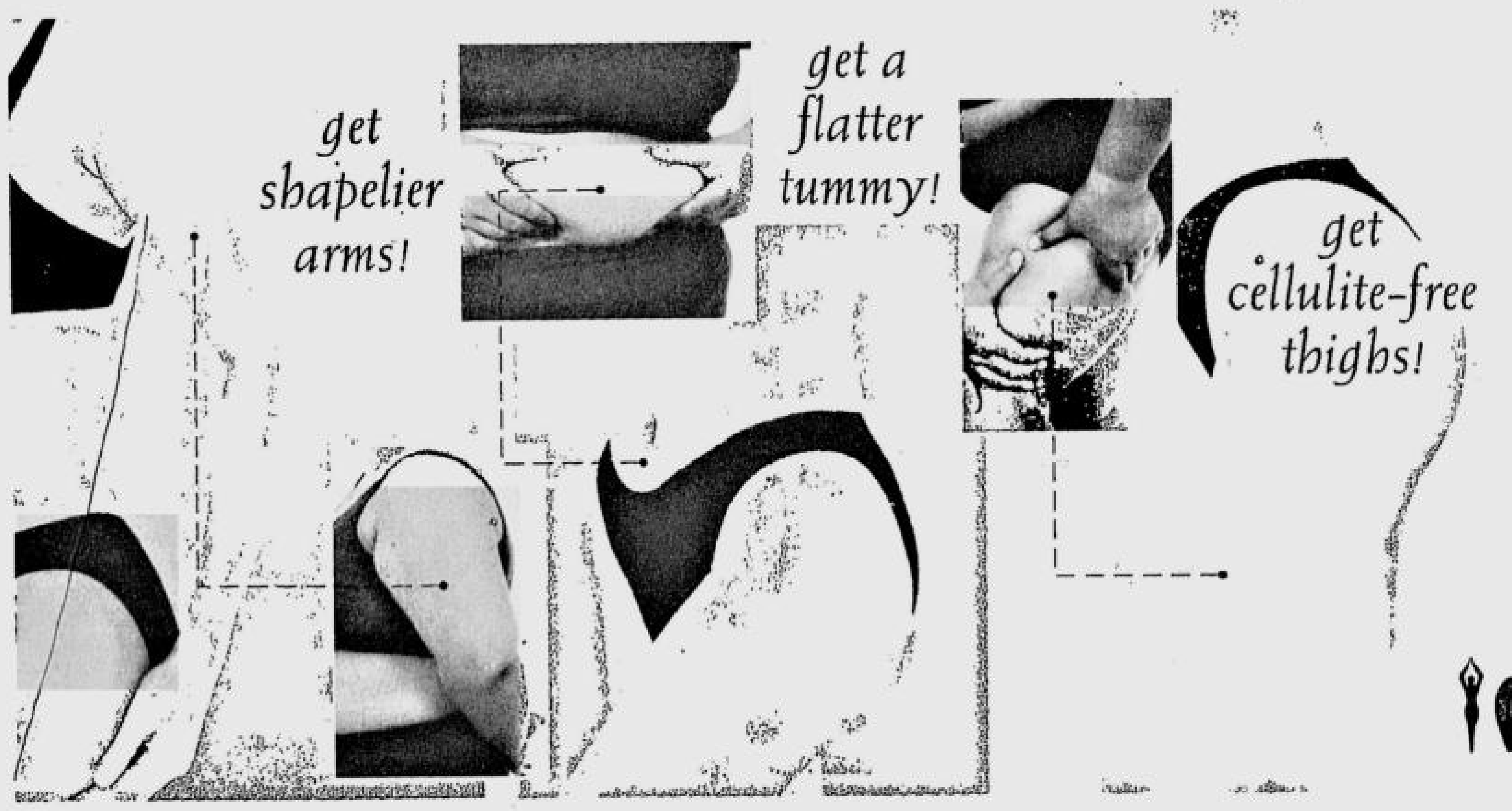
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Roco says poor left out in businessmen's agenda

From page A1

"Although I tried to look hard, I didn't catch the stress on participation, on participatory democracy," he said at a dinner with a small group of PCCI officials and executives of Philippine Long Distance and Telephone Co. at the Dusit Hotel.

"The participatory nature of a democratic society is lost. And yet wherever I go, I [meet] the poorest of the poor ... the constant refrain that they say is: Will they listen to us? Can we talk to you? Will you remember us?"

It's about time, that the country's elite leadership stop dictating on the poor on how to lead their lives, said Roco, who at the start of his talk stood up to draw a diagram of the dichotomy of the elite and the poor on a makeshift board.

"So many of us, like the *ilustrados* of the past, are *manhid* (indifferent)," he said. "The *ilustrados* and the elite have always not taken care of the people ... We must stop saying to the poor people: 'We know what's good for you, and we'll tell you what's good for you.'"

Not risk takers

Former Finance Secretary Jose Pardo, head of the PCC Council of Business Leaders, butted in to explain that the agenda was just a draft, and that the group had started reaching out to a broad spectrum of society to come up with solutions to problems.

"I must admit that there's something wrong with our elite. Basically, as a people, we are not seekers; we are not risk takers. That is something that we should develop," said Donald G. Dee, PCCI executive vice president.

Upon Pardo's prodding, Menardo "Butch" Jimenez Jr., PLDT vice president for media and communications, disclosed that the PCCI had devised a scientific way to help the next president get the pulse of the people within 24 hours.

"It's basically pulsing, using the cell phone, but it's a little bit more sophisticated than that," he explained at the dinner.

Roco slams 5-year high school

IN Dipolog City, Raul Roco yesterday said that adding an extra year between Grade 6 and first year high school was uncalled for at this point because "its logistical requirement is fantastic."

"How could the government justify adding another school year in high school if even an elementary graduate is qualified to run for President of this country?" Roco said as he slammed the Department of Education for imposing a five-year curriculum on all public high schools starting June.

Roco said the program called for an additional P48 billion to be infused into DepEd. Since there are about 200,000 teachers, the new curriculum needs a 25- percent increase in the number of teachers (40,000 more teachers).

Multiply that with the teacher's minimum wage (P10,000), the government needs another P4 billion every month, or P48 billion a year, according to Roco.

Think out of the box

Roco also called attention to the PCCI's "well-planned" but "boxed" proposals to address the country's huge budget deficit, ballooning foreign debt, deteriorating competitiveness, crisis in investor confidence and widespread poverty, among others.

To solve the country's problems, the business group proposed to do the following: awarding 100 scholarship grants to poor deserving college students; providing 100 far-flung schools with 100 TV sets (linked to Dream Satellite); constructing 1,000 new classrooms and providing medicines and vaccines to 100 health care centers, among others.

"You can't have standard solutions. You must think out of the box and throw away any boxes. That's our only chance," Roco said. "It's better to be focused. And the focus is to inspire, educate and tell the people that their help is needed."

He admitted he couldn't adopt all of the businessmen's proposals if he got elected, stressing that these had to be given priorities.

The PCCI also proposed government approaches to the country's problems, such as harnessing a mediation system between management and labor, identifying top 100 over-budgeted corporations, resolving pending tax cases, arresting and indicting the top 10 smugglers, and intensifying lifestyle checks.

Privatize customs

Roco broached the idea of privatizing the corrupt-ridden Bureau of Customs to root out the businessmen's No. 1 problem: smuggling. And the businessmen welcomed it. *With a report from Michael Lim Ubac*

Mobile phone . . .

From page A1

Globe Telecom Inc. president Gerardo Ablaza Jr. said the company could be at the forefront of this "new revolution" using its load transfer scheme called Share-a-Load.

Ablaza said he had heard of people using their Globe credits on their own to tip a courteous waiter or pay for their public transport.

"We are not there yet but this is a scenario that can happen given how people continually find other ways of using the cellular phone aside from calling or texting," he told reporters.

The Ayala-owned company introduced Share-a-Load on Jan. 17 to Globe and Touch Mobile subscribers, who have reached more than 9 million.

Analysts agree that the credit transfer scheme, like Share-a-Load, could evolve into a cash-like product—like a credit or a debit card—as more and more Filipinos become cellular phone subscribers.

The credit transfer scheme enables subscribers to send load credits, through text messaging, between Globe postpaid to prepaid subscribers and among prepaid subscribers. Load credits are available in various denominations ranging from P5 to P500.

Marketing strategy

Fierce competitor Smart Communications Inc. and its affiliate Talk N' Text also have their own version of the scheme, called Pasa Load. Only, theirs is limited to prepaid subscribers.

An industry player said Globe could have an easier time devising a marketing strategy for its credit transfer program because, at the outset, it had included the post-paid subscribers in the scheme, unlike Smart.

Still, Ablaza said the carrier was not yet prepared for the revolution that Globe planned to introduce.

An analyst said a lot of mechanics had to be worked out, including possibly securing permits from government agencies, like the trade department. The same analyst said that a certain level of penetration had to be achieved to make the plan of "monetizing" the Globe credits more efficient.

But once Globe or even Smart hacks it, profits would keep on churning at a faster pace.

Smart more profitable

Globe was the most profitable listed company last year after ending 2003 with net profits of P10.3 billion. Unlisted Smart is even more profitable with P16.1 billion in net income last year.

Globe said that two months after introducing Share-a-Load, it already handled close to one million credit load transfer in its network. Very soon, the product will post a million hits, Ablaza said during a talk with reporters at the company's stockholders meeting last Monday.

Globe's postpaid subscribers, who totaled 685,026 as of end-2003, helped increase the usage of Share-a-Load in the past two months.

"Share-a-Load is doing very well," Ablaza said. "We increasingly see opportunities. The increased activity would translate to better revenue."

Niche for Globe

He added: "We're up against a competitor with the combined strength of Smart and Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. Those that dominate the market have an advantage but we are trying to create our niche where we draw strength from.

"We hope that with the familiarity of the system, the postpaid will spur activity by the use of the service since this is the fastest way for a prepaid subscriber who had just ran out of load to get credits."

As of end-2003, Globe had a total of 8.9 million mobile phone subscribers. Smart, on the other hand, had 12.9 million subscribers. More than 90 percent of both firms' subscriber base subscribed to prepaid service.

Anytime, anywhere

Globe and Smart, aside from introducing credit load transfer, also reduced call rates and offered lower denominated electronic loads to stimulate usage. Cellular airtime rates are now pegged at P6.50 per minute and P7.50 per minute for calls made to other cellular operators.

Ablaza said Globe had 250,000 retailers offering reloading facilities to prepaid subscribers so that they could reload airtime value or credits anytime, anywhere.

Smart, for its part, has been able to increase its distribution outlet to 400,000 nationwide. After it launched e-load, Smart introduced a new product that allows for as low as P2 load transfers to other subscribers.

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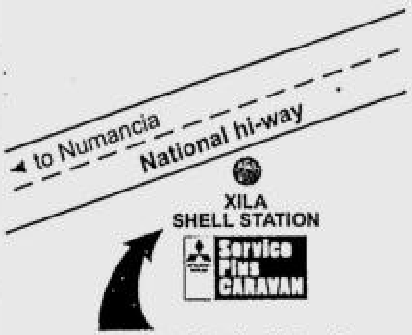

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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

Guns silent as peace monitors arrive in South

PEACE MONITOR: Brig. Gen. Zulkifli Mohamad Zain, chief of the Malaysian ceasefire monitoring team (left), shakes hands with Filipino troops upon arrival at the Southern Command headquarters in Zamboanga City. AFP

By Rosa-May V. De Guzman
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—No major armed skirmishes were reported yesterday between the military and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as the advanced survey party of a Malaysian-led international monitoring team arrived in southern Philippines to inspect rebel camps ahead of the peace talks next month.

Since last week, according to MILF coordinating committee on cessation of hostilities chief Benjie Midtimbang, there have been no confrontation between MILF fighters and government soldiers.

President Macapagal-Arroyo signed a memorandum on March 17, reminding the military to strictly observe a bilateral cease-fire agreement it signed with the MILF on July 19, 2003.

"So far there have been no reported major armed skirmishes between our men in the field and soldiers since last week," Midtimbang said.

Advance party

According to MILF vice chair for political affairs Ghazali Jaafar, the 12-man advance party, headed by Malaysian Brig. Gen. Zulkifli bin Mohd Zain, arrived in Zamboanga City early Wednesday. The team will visit both military and rebel camps around Mindanao.

In the nine-day tour around Mindanao, Mohd Zain will be accompanied by Malaysian Col. Abdul Hadi Hussin, Lt. Col. Tengku Ahmad Noor Bin Tuan Chik, Lt. Col. Rahman Bin Alavi, Lt. Col. Khlir Bin Mohd Nor, Lt. Cmdr. Zulkifle Bin Hasni, Mohd Noor bin Mohamad, Ayatillah bin Ahmad, Ahmad Faris bin Ahmad, Kahiri bin Omar, Lt. Col. Wan Arifin bin Wan Salleh and Haizan Shah Osman.

Members of the international monitoring mission, who will oversee the implementation of a peace accord between the government and the MILF rebels, will arrive soon after the assessment by the advance party.

No JI probe

In Manila, Malaysian Ambassador Mohammad Taufik said the advance team was "to look into logistics and what kind of arrangements are there for the eventual arrival of the international monitoring team."

He also said the Malaysian observers would not be investigating claims that members of the Al-qaida-linked Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terror group were training in MILF camps.

"The issue of JI is a separate issue. It is not in their mandate," Taufik said, adding that the Philippine government should be the one to investigate the such allegations.

Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita had said that some 30 Indonesian JI members were believed to be training in MILF-held territories in Central Mindanao.

But the MILF leadership had denied the allegation, and rebel negotiator Roberto Alonto said the other day the Malaysian team was welcome to check the alleged JI presence in rebel camps.

Alarming

Though guns were silent in war-torn areas of the region, the rebel group expressed alarm over what they called "provocative" action demonstrated by elements of the Armed Forces in various parts of Central Mindanao.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu specifically noted the deployment of Marine troops and militiamen the other day in Kapatagan and Balabagan, towns situated in the borders of Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao.

Kabalu said these areas, where the Marines were deployed, were part of Camp Abubakar where the monitoring team was expected to meet MILF commanders under their 101st Base Command. *With a report from AFP*

Coast Guard wants ferry search halted

By Leila B. Salaverria

COAST Guard officials yesterday recommended a halt to retrieval operations in the SuperFerry 14 disaster after no remains were recovered from the ship in three days of mopping-up operations.

PCG Commandant Vice Admiral Arthur Gosingan yesterday said Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza already has the Philippine Coast Guard recommendation and will be the one to declare the retrieval operations finished.

PCG Commodore Wilfredo Tamayo, who supervised the task of recovering the bodies from the scuttled ship, said retrieval should be stopped and salvage work and the removal of the wreck should commence.

He said there was a possibility that more bodies could still be found in the ship when salvage operations begin.

PCG divers and personnel from the Philippine Navy and the Bureau of Fire Protection spent more than three weeks recovering bodies from the SuperFerry 14 which caught fire on Feb. 27 shortly after it left Manila for Bacolod and Cagayan de Oro. The ship now lies tilted on its starboard side in Mariveles, Bataan.

No official death toll on the disaster has been released because the recovered remains are still being tested, PCG spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo said yesterday.

Tamayo said it will be the National Bureau of Investigation that will declare the death toll after the recovered body parts have been subjected to forensic testing, "as it is possible that two body parts could belong to one person."

Altogether, 111 passengers have been claimed by relatives as missing, and 28 bodies, 49 skeletons and 37 body parts have been recovered from the ship, Philippine Coast Guard figures show.

The skeletons, body parts and bodies have been turned over to the NBI for forensic testing.

Of the recovered bodies, 14 have been identified and turned over to relatives. Another four have been identified but have yet to be delivered to the families.

Ten bodies have been partially identified, but are still subject to verification, the NBI said.

Sipadan kidnap suspect nabbed

By Philip C. Tubeza

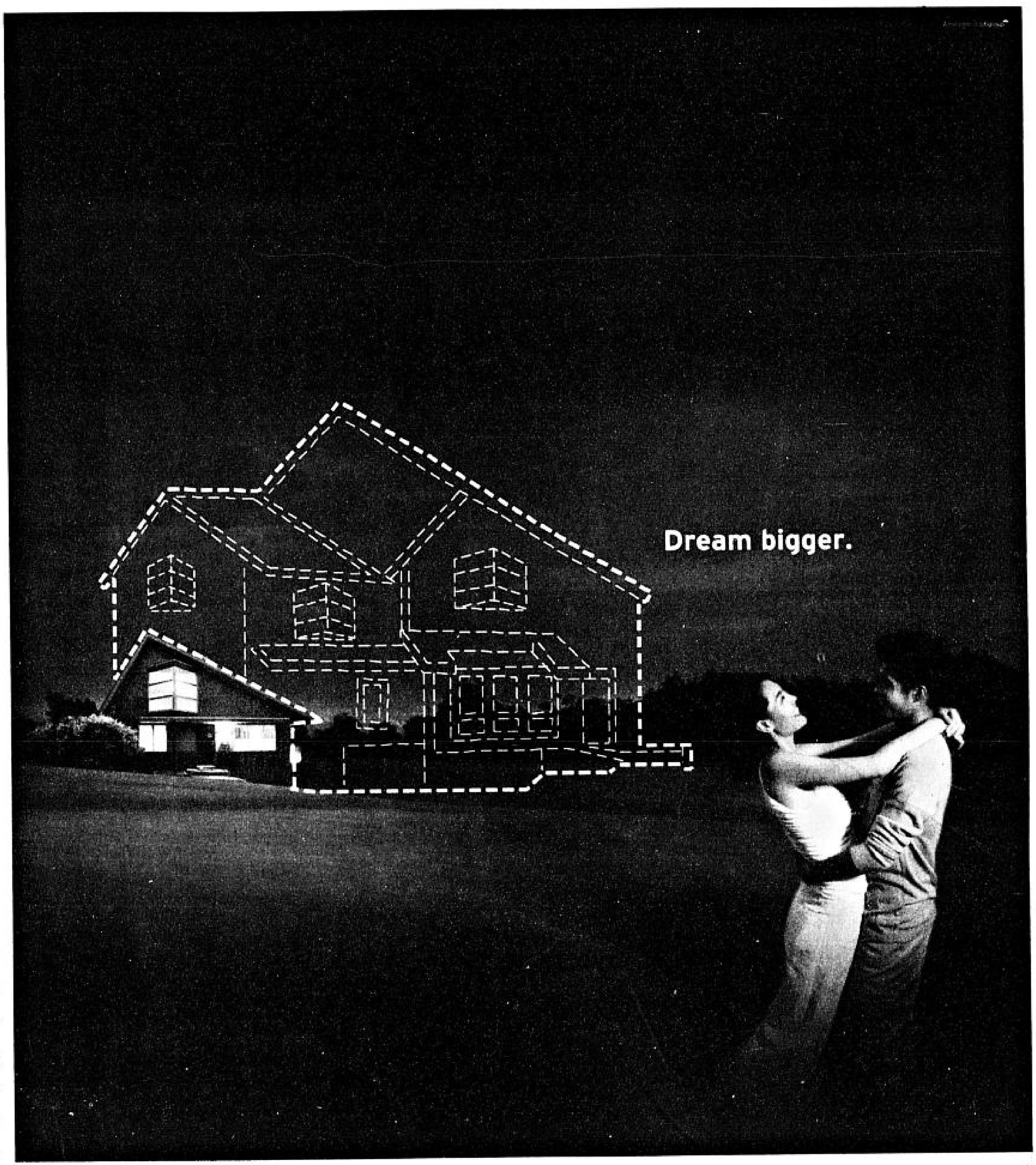
THE DEPARTMENT of Justice yesterday presented a suspected Abu Sayyaf member who was allegedly involved in the Sipadan kidnapping incident in 2000.

Acting Justice Secretary Ma. Merceditas Gutierrez presented to the media Michael Pajiji, who was identified as one of around 40 Abu Sayyaf members who raided the Sipadan resort in Sabah, Malaysia on April 23, 2000.

The bandits kidnapped 19 tourists from France, South Africa, Finland, Germany, and Malaysia and two Filipinos. They held them hostage in Sulu until the victims were released with ransom.

Gutierrez said Pajiji was arrested by the 10th Marine Battalion Landing Team in his house in Indanan, Sulu, on March 15. He was nabbed on the basis of an arrest warrant issued by the Zamboanga City Regional Trial Court.

State Prosecutor Aristotle Reyes said Pajiji was one of the "principals" accused in the Sipadan kidnapping case filed before Judge Erlinda Pinera Uy, of Branch 162 of the Pasig City Regional Trial Court.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John Osmeña: Not his son's keeper

By Christine O. Avendaño

BLOOD is not thicker than water in the case of this father and son.

Estranged from his son for the past two years now, reelectionist Sen. John Osmeña yesterday vowed he would not intervene in a drug shipment case allegedly involving an associate of his son, Cebu Vice Gov. John Gregory in Cebu. *(See related story in Across the Nation, Page A15).*

Osmeña told a news conference in the Senate yesterday that he did not expect his son to ask for his help. "*Takot siya siguro, alam niya na sasabunin ko siya*, (He's afraid to call me because he knows he would get a scolding from me)," he said.

The young Osmeña, who is running for Cebu governor in May, had denied reports he tried to intervene in the release of 60 drums of chemicals used allegedly to make shabu that were imported from China by an alleged representative of a firm headed by his associate.

The senator urged authorities to immediately conduct an investigation, admitting it would be difficult for him to do so because he is seeking reelection. "That's all I ask. Do your job. Do it quick. Regardless of the consequences, regardless of who is going to be involved," said Osmeña who is running under the administration coalition K-4.

Osmeña admitted to reporters that he had not spoken to his son for two years now since he was opposed John Gregory's decision to run for governor of Cebu, telling him he was too young to seek the position.

He confided that his son had said "hurtful things" against him, like saying he would take the side of Cebu Gov. Pablo Garcia because the latter could help him win the election, more than his father.

John Gregory, who belongs to the Nationalist People's Coalition, is running against Garcia's daughter, who is supported by the ruling part Lakas.

"*Nakalimutan niyang dalawang eleksyon na sunod-sunod ay napanalo ko siya*" (He has forgotten that I helped him win in two elections), Osmeña told reporters.

Osmeña said he learned of his son's predicament only when a mutual friend told him about it. He said he even sent word to his son telling him to withdraw from the election, but the latter rejected the proposal.

"He is adamant. He will still run for the post. That is his decision," Osmeña said, adding that his son has a mind of his own. "He wants to go his own way, so let it be that way," he said.

RP cop killed in Kosovo

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO—Gunmen raked a United Nations patrol car with bullets late on Tuesday, killing a Filipino UN policeman and his Kosovo Albanian partner in what looked like an ambush.

The motive for the killing, which comes on the heels of Kosovo's worst spasm of ethnic violence since 1999, was not immediately clear, UN police spokesperson Derek Chappell said. He didn't identify the Filipino casualty.

"There is no evidence of linkage," he said, rejecting speculation Albanian extremists blamed for last week's upsurge of clashes were taking revenge on UN police for Albanians killed by NATO-led troops in some of the confrontations.

UN police officials said officers were "angry, sad and emotional." The attack, in the village of Luzane some 20 km (12 miles) north of the capital Pristina, occurred just ahead of a visit by European Union foreign and security envoy Javier Solana to discuss the latest crisis in Kosovo.

A Kosovo police source said a saloon car had pulled up alongside the clearly marked orange-and-white patrol car and gunmen opened fire with rifles.

The patrol had returned fire. An Albanian police interpreter was lightly wounded.

The Koha Ditore daily, quoting police, said two AK 47 automatic rifles had been discovered at the attack scene.

A report that one attacker had also been killed was denied by Kosovo police. However, a Reuters photographer said NATO troops on Wednesay raided the Pristina house of what an officer on the scene called "one of the perpetrators."

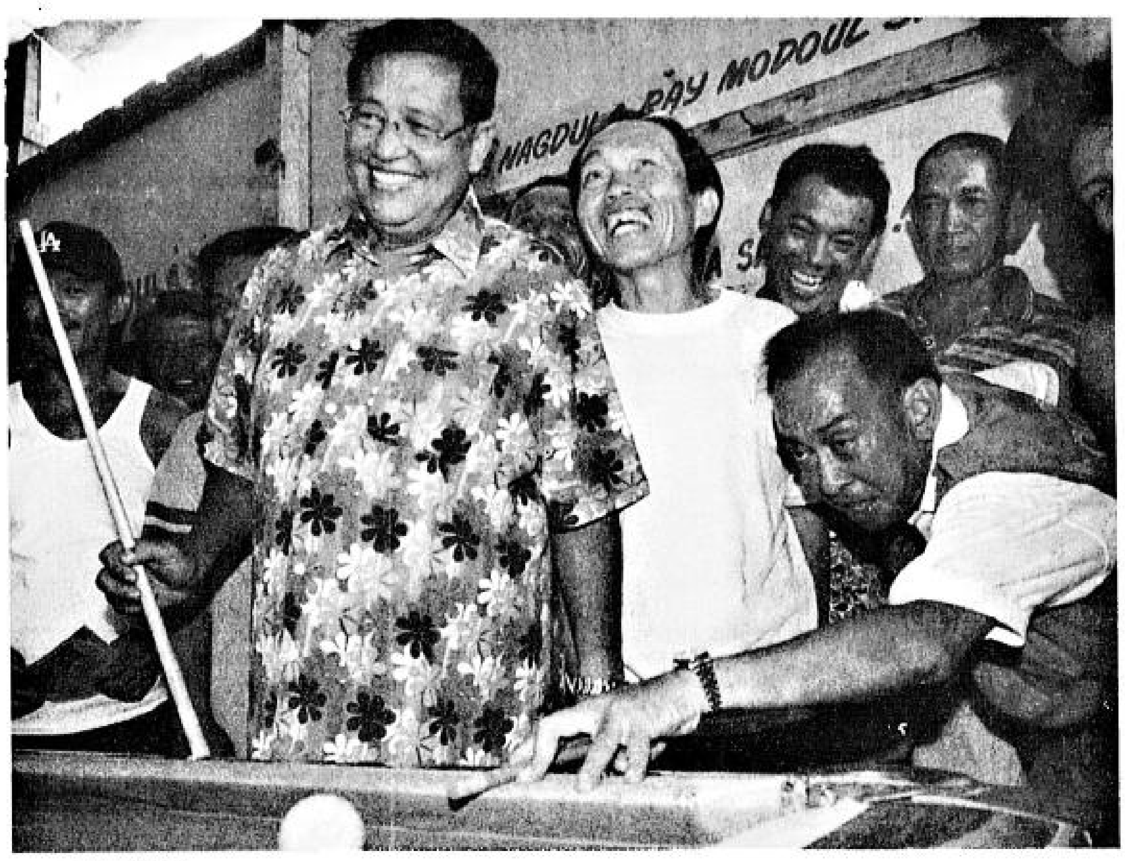
In dozens of Albanian-Serb clashes in the space of 48 hours last week, 28 people were killed and 3,600 Serbs driven from their homes in enclaves all over Kosovo.

NATO troops and UN police, often caught in the middle of the battles, restored order at the weekend after NATO rushed in reinforcements. Calm had prevailed until Tuesday night's attack.

Western powers backed Serbia's charge that the wave of attacks last week was orchestrated and appeared aimed at "ethnically cleansing" central Kosovo of remaining Serbs.

Solana's trip coincides with the fifth anniversary of the start of NATO's 78-day bombing war against Serbia in 1999 to force Belgrade to withdraw its troops from Kosovo and stop persecuting Albanian civilians during a separatist uprising.

Britain, Germany, France and other NATO allies rushed 2,000 more troops in Kosovo last week to help quell the violence, bring the peace force to over 20,000-strong. *Reuters*



POOL BREAK

Alyansa ng Pag-asa presidential candidate Raul Roco (left) and his running mate Herminio Aquino play billiards during a break in their campaign swing through Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte, yesterday.

Rasul calls GMA quack doctor of RP economy

THE THREE years under President Macapagal-Arroyo have been a disaster, another six years would be a catastrophe.

This was the opposition's quick reply when the President warned the Filipinos of a "disaster" if they vote for "another actor" as president on May 10.

"What disaster is she talking about when the country is already in a state of calamity, caused by (her) administration? She is the greatest tragedy since Pinatubo," said PRO-FPJ-Citizens Rebuilding Our Nation spokesperson Ed Araullo.

The President is a "quack doctor of economics," added Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino senatorial candidate Amina Rasul.

She has failed to cure the causes of the peso's fall—debt, deficit and corruption. Worse, she practices "voodoo economics because every time the peso falls, she blames it on Fernando Poe Jr," Rasul said.

"But it is not FPJ who is at the helm of the country, but someone who claims she's a trained economist," Rasul said referring to Ms Macapagal who boasts of a doctorate degree in Economics from the University of the Philippines.

She recalled that when Ms Macapagal ousted Joseph Estrada and assumed the presidency on Jan. 2001, the peso was 49 to the US dollar.

"Before she assumed power, she promised to be the savior of the peso. Oust Erap and the peso will go up, she boasted. Now the peso is a whisker short of 57 to a dollar," Rasul said.

"The peso has depreciated 16 percent in three years, the fastest plunge in history, and one of the few currencies which has failed to appreciate against the dollar," she added.

The KNP senatorial candidate also disclosed that the President's borrowing binge in the last 1,000 days is the main reason for the peso's fall. National debt by end of 2001 was P2.4 trillion. By 2003, it had risen to P3.4 trillion. This does not include the liabilities of the National Power Corporation and other government corporations.

"Fears of this country teetering on an Argentina-like default on its loan payments have triggered a stampede for dollars, widening its gap over the peso, and making the loans we have to incur to service our debts more expensive," she said.

"She racked up a debt more than what Ramos and Estrada jointly incurred. She borrowed to the tune of P1.175 billion a day," she revealed.

Ms Macapagal posted the highest unemployment rate, the largest debt pile-up, and the biggest budgetary deficit in history ," Araullo said.

"With her as national coach, and Jose Pidal as trainer, the Philippines can bag the bronze medal, if there were an Olympics in stealing," he said referring to the country's consistent landing in the top three in surveys of most graft-plagued nations.

"As a result, foreign investors shun us not only because of corruption but because she has neglected peace and order and failed to build new infrastructure—unless it is kickback-ridden like the most expensive boulevard she built," Araullo added.

Gloria faces new DQ case

By Martin P. Marfil

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is facing fresh disqualification case in the Commission on Elections (Comelec), this time involving the distribution of the controversial free Philhealth cards to indigents.

Lawyers Agripino Baybay and Patrick Velez, who claimed to be members of a group calling itself Pro-Con(stitution), yesterday petitioned the Comelec to disqualify Ms Macapagal on grounds that she was behind the enhanced Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) Greater Medicare Access or GMA program which aim was to prop up her candidacy.

This is the second petition filed with the Comelec seeking to disqualify Ms Macapagal from running for president. The first alleged that her camp violated the air-time limitations of political advertisements.

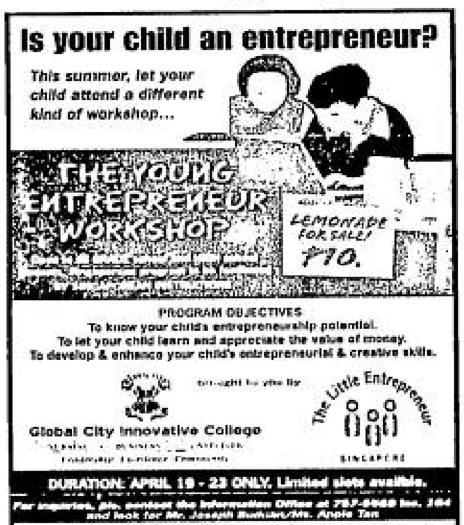
Two weeks ago, lawyer Ramon Rana, who also claimed to be a member of Phil-Con, filed a complaint against Philhealth President Francisco Duque and PCSO Chair Ma. Livia "Honeygirl" de Leon for alleged vote-buying, illegal use of public funds, electioneering and use of prohibited propaganda materials in connection with the charity office's GMA program.

Under the program, according to Rana, some five million indigent-families will be enrolled that is expected to cost the government P6 billion in public funds. But De Leon and Duque clarified that only P3 billion had been allotted for the program at the start of the year and that their target reach was only about 500,000 families.

In a 17-page petition, Baybay and Velez alleged that the enhanced PCSO GMA program was initiated by Ms Macapagal herself through Executive Order No. 276 she signed on Jan. 29 2004. The Pro-Con lawyers said the EO directed the PCSO and Philhealth to implement the program, and this meant that the President was in the "forefront" of the violation of the Omnibus Election Code.

Baybay and Velez said a day after the filing of the complaint against Duque and De Leon, Ms Macapagal was even seen and heard in media taunting those who had questioned the Philhealth membership drive to an audience in Angeles City.

Ms Macapagal, the two lawyers said, was engaged in "vote-buying" when she distributed the cards and offered memberships for free. And by asking government officials to implement the program, the lawyers said the President was involved in electioneering, as well as use of undue influence on her subordinates and illegal use of public funds.



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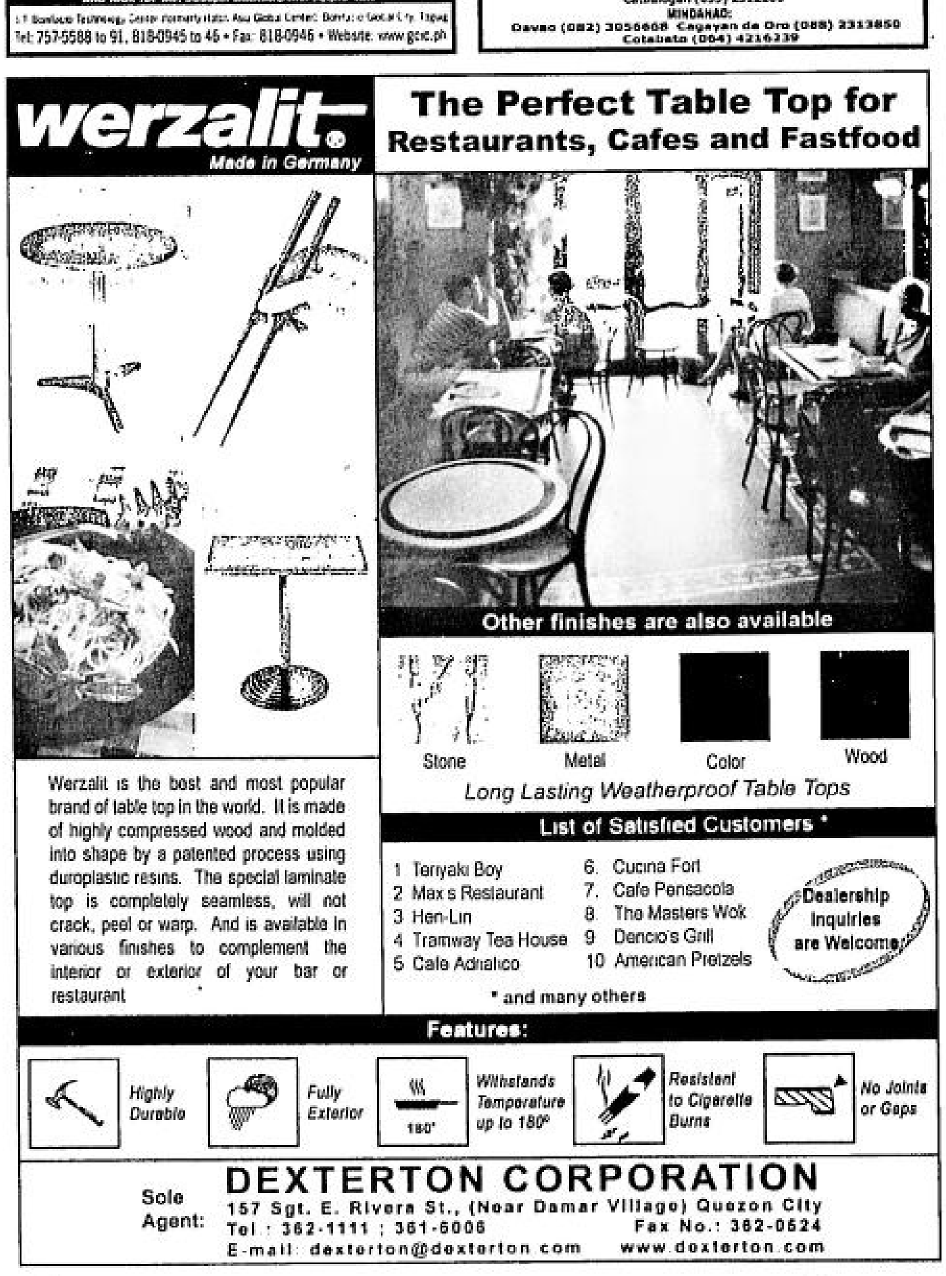

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Suspended Customs exec in for more trouble for falsifying home address

By Armand N. Nocum

WHERE is home?

This is what Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio wants to find out this time from a customs official he had suspended earlier.

Last year, Customs Deputy Commissioner Gil Valera was among several ranking officials of the public works, internal revenue, and customs bureau who were charged with graft for allegedly flunking the government's lifestyle check.

Villa-Ignacio said this time Customs Deputy Commissioner Gil Valera could be liable for falsifying records of his address when he claimed he lives in an abandoned building in Abra.

"We've made an inquiry. The building is abandoned. It's a dilapidated building, like a haunted house," Villa-Ignacio said of the address Valera placed in a criminal and administrative complaint he filed against the Special Prosecutor before the Ombudsman Tuesday.

Valera's wrote down his address as "1 Partelo corner Taft Street, Bangued, Abra."

But Villa-Ignacio found this odd since Valera works at the Bureau of Customs office in Manila.

"Why hide his address when he has houses in Metro Manila," Villa-Ignacio said.

Valera denied his address is fictitious. "We have a place there," he said, referring to his "ancestral home" in Abra, adding that people live in the house.

In the course of the investigation of his alleged ill-gotten wealth, Villa-Ignacio said they discovered that Valera had also allegedly entered into an illegal "compromise agreement" with a firm that owes the government P37,195,859 in customs duties and taxes.

Villa-Ignacio signed Valera's six-month suspension order last week.

But in his complaint against the Special Prosecutor, Valera questioned Villa-Ignacio's powers to suspend him, arguing that only the Ombudsman and his deputies are empowered to do so under the law.

Valera said filing the case would show that minor government workers are no longer going to take the Ombudsman's alleged "selective harassment" sitting down.

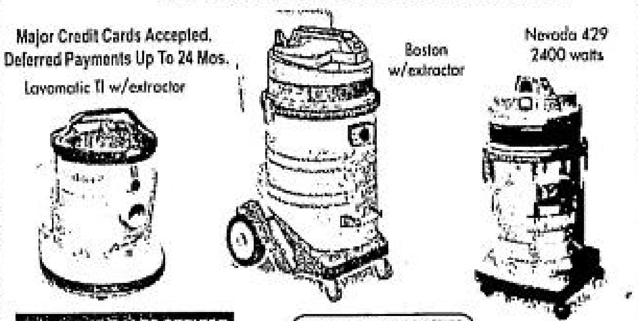
He said it was Villa-Ignacio who broke the law by signing the order suspending him, even if he is not empowered to do so.

Contacted by the INQUIRER for comment, Villa-Ignacio clarified that Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo had authorized Valera's suspension order. Marcelo inhibited himself from ruling on the case.

"It's part of the job," Villa-Ignacio said, dismissing the matter as a "simple case of harassment."

Valera added that while the lifestyle check program included undersecretaries, assistant secretaries and lower ranking officials, the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission has dismissed graft cases against some members of the Cabinet.

Malacañang's "committee of peers" recently overturned the guilty verdicts of the PAGC involving graft cases separately filed against former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez and Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Hernani Braganza.



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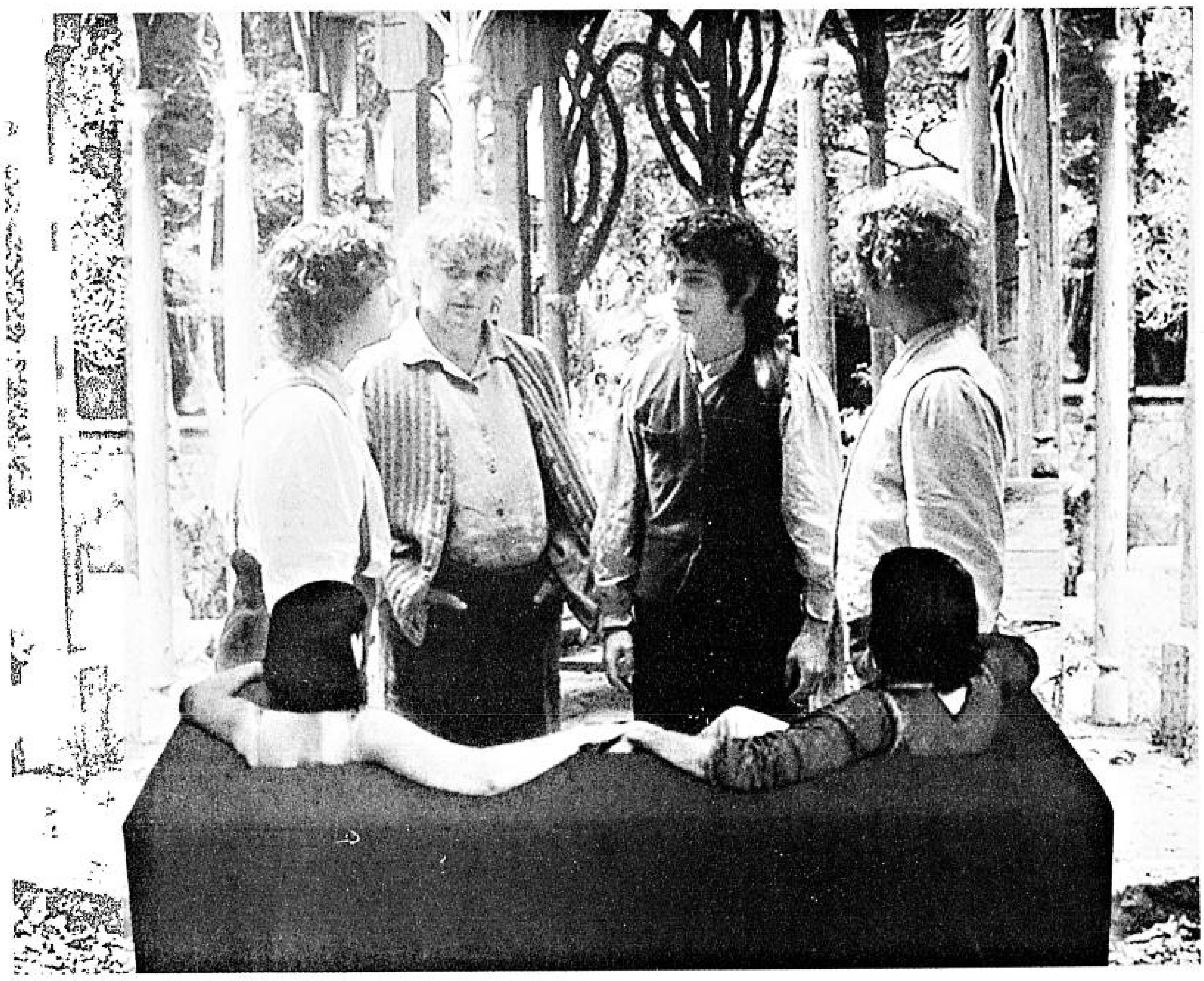

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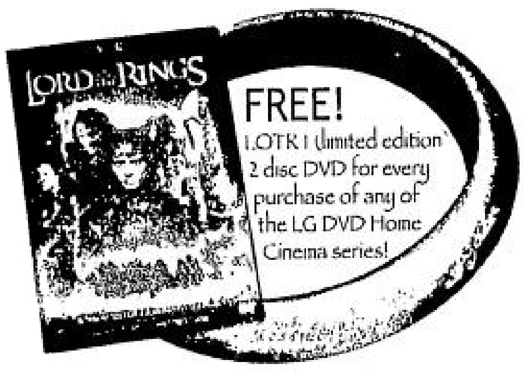

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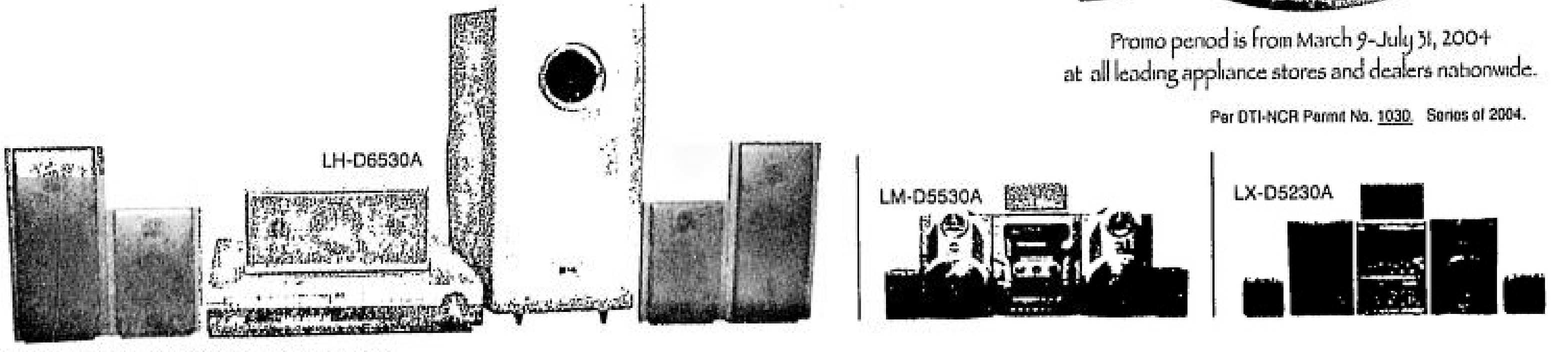

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75 Filipinos die of TB every day, WHO reports

By Blanche S. Rivera

SOMEONE in the world dies of tuberculosis every 10 seconds while 14 people in the Western Pacific region get infected with the ailment every 14 seconds, the burden falling mostly on developing nations like the Philippines, according to the World Health Organization.

Seventy-five Filipinos die of tuberculosis every day, making it the sixth leading cause of mortality in the country. The Philippines ranks eighth among 22 countries with the highest burden of tuberculosis.

The WHO, however, noted that the tuberculosis situation in the Philippines is improving as 164 patients get treatment every day, or around 60,000 of the 65,000 new cases in 2002.

Michael Voniatis, medical officer of the WHO's Stop TB Programme in the Philippines, said that of the 250,000 cases diagnosed in the last four years, around 200,000 have been treated.

"That is even a conservative estimate ... There was a good push from the WHO in the beginning but the Philippine government and private sector have been doing a good job," Voniatis said in a press conference to mark the World Tuberculosis Day yesterday.

He lauded the Philippines and India for a very fast expansion of the directly observed treatment short course (DOTS), a treatment strategy being promoted by the WHO.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said that 2004 would be a "crucial year" for the Philippines to achieve the WHO target for next year: 70 percent of cases detected and treated under DOTS, and 85 percent of cases cured and 100 percent availability of DOTS.

The country has registered 88 percent success rate in treatment of sputum-positive tuberculosis cases.

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RP to ask Vietnam to clarify Spratlys tours

By Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINES will verify and check reports on Vietnamese plans to send tourists to the disputed Spratly Islands, acting Foreign Secretary Rafael Seguis said yesterday.

"We shall get the facts first from our embassy and make our evaluation before we issue a reaction," Seguis told reporters in an interview.

Seguis said the 2002 code of conduct signed between the Spratly claimants did not have a provision on tourism in the area because nobody thought about it during the drafting of the paper.

On Tuesday, the Associated Press quoted Do Nhu Pu, chair of Vietnam's People's Committee of the Spratlys Islands Districts, as saying that the first trip of about 100 tourists would take place by mid-April.

The tour, he added, would be conducted by boat to the islands where there are Vietnamese military outposts. It would then continue to oil rigs located near the Spratlys and also to Phu Quoc Island, which is not part of the disputed atolls, off Vietnam's southern coast.

DFA spokesperson Julia Heidemann said she had spoken to Philippine ambassador to Vietnam Victoriano Lecaros, who told her that he would seek clarification on the matter from the Vietnamese foreign ministry.

Heidemann said the DFA would want to know if the tours would really be conducted by a private company and if they really had prior approval from Hanoi.

"We would like to know if some kind of consultation was held first with the other claimants whether this is okay and is in accordance with the code of conduct," she added.

The non-binding Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, was signed in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on Nov. 4, 2002, by the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China.

According to the declaration, the claimants may conduct explorations or undertake cooperative activities. These include marine environmental protection, marine scientific research, safety of navigation and communication at sea.

The Spratlys, believed to have rich oil and natural gas reserves in the South China Sea, are claimed in whole or in party by Vietnam, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei and Malaysia.

Reds to seek release of political prisoners in Oslo

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—The communist-led National Democratic Front (NDF) will press for the release of political prisoners when the peace talks resume next week in Oslo, Norway.

NDF peace panel chair Luis Jalandoni said that among the prisoners they want released is New People's Army (NPA) guerrilla Arlan Tarino, who was wounded and captured in a raid by government soldiers on Feb. 24 in Dumarao town, Capiz.

Jalandoni, who is based in the NDF International Office in Utrecht, The Netherlands, made the announcement through phone patch to delegates of the regional assembly of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) in Panay held here.

He said the NDF panel would also push the indemnification of around 10,000 victims of human rights violations under the Marcos dictatorship.

Jalandoni, a former priest from Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, said a key issue in the talks set from March 30 to April 2 is the activation of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC).

The JMC will oversee the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) signed by the two panels in 1998.

The CARHRIHL is the first of four agreements that the NDF wants to sign with the Philippine government in the bid to end the 35-year-old armed conflict, one of the world's longest-running insurgency.

After the formation of the JMC, the NDF wants to sign separate agreements on social and economic reforms, political and electoral reforms, and on the cessation of hostilities and disposition of armed forces.

The 10-member JMC is composed of Fidel Agcaoili, Connie Ledesma and Danilo Borjal from the NDF; and Rene Sarmiento, Chito Gascon and Risa Baraquel from the government.

The NDF has nominated Philippine Independent Church bishop Tomas Millamena and Marie Hilao-Enriquez, secretary general of the human rights group Karapatan and the Samahan ng mga Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at para sa Amnestiya (Selda) as observers to the JMC while the government panel has nominated Mercy Contreras and Aileen Bacalzo.

The government and the NDF have expressed optimism in the holding of the next round of negotiations.

In a press conference on Sunday during the K-4 campaign sortie here, President Macapagal-Arroyo said the negotiations were "ahead of schedule."

In a separate phone patch message during the same event, exiled Communist Party of the Philippines founding chair Jose Maria Sison said the NDF would welcome any willingness of the government to find solutions to the armed conflict.

"But this does not mean that (the President) has become a Virgin Mary and has suddenly become good," Sison said in explaining their continued negotiations with the Macapagal administration.

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Pols with 'terror intent' warned

A NEW, elite anti-terrorism task force created by President Macapagal-Arroyo will target not only the usual suspects but also "politicians with terrorist intent" that could launch a "copycat" of the Madrid bombings.

"The antiterrorism task force is a shield for democracy. Because of the tragedy that happened in Spain, we do not want any copycat scenarios to happen. Terrorists or politicians with terrorist intent had better be forewarned," said Ms Macapagal in a statement.

The President had included politicians in the watch list apparently due to the rising incidence of election-related violence in the country and the discovery of more than a hundred private armies under the employ of warlords nationwide.

"Let no one underestimate our determination to push through with clean, honest and orderly elections," said the President.

But opposition senatorial bet Ernesto Maceda warned that the task force could be used by the government to cook up intelligence reports of a terrorist or destabilization attempt against the government to justify the postponement of the May 10 polls.

The opposition has criticized the President's pro-US stance in the invasion of Iraq which has made the country vulnerable to terrorist attacks like the railway blasts in Spain's capital.

The President said the task force would set up a tighter system of vigilance that would "check every move in the underground."

"We need everybody's support and I appeal to the public to back up the task force," the President said.

The task force will be headed by Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita who met with officials of the Armed Forces, Philippine National Police, Bureau of Immigration, National Bureau of Investigation, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency and Department of Transportation and Communications to lay down the body's duties.

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9.) Apr 24 / 8:30AM-5:30PM FESTIVE COOKIES-P2,000 Choco Rounds, Spiced Fruits & Nuts, Banana, Pecan, Carrot, Choco, Apple & Oatmeal Cookies NEXT SCHED: May 22
10.) Apr 26-30/ 8:30AM-5:30PM SPECIAL BAKING- P12,500 Learn to make 30 kinds of special cakes from around the world. Each cake has a different icing and decoration. NEXT SCHED: May 24 - 28
11.) May 1 / 8:30AM-5:30PM SUGAR FREE II- P2,500 Almond Lemon, Oatmeal Chocolate Chunk Cookies, Chocolate Chiffon Cake w/ light Choco Frosting, Chocolate Brownie Supreme, Chocolate Cake w/ Chocolate Frosting NEXT SCHED: May 29

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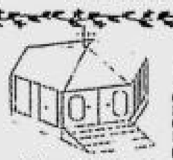

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Report: Bush warned of al-Qaida plans

WASHINGTON—Members of the commission investigating the Sept. 11 attacks said on Tuesday that a series of intelligence reports sent to President George W. Bush in 2001 warned of an imminent, possibly catastrophic attack by al-Qaida, a disclosure that prompted harsh questioning of Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and other administration officials about why they had not done more to preempt a possible terrorist strike.

The Clinton administration's counterterrorism policies were also the subject of sharp questioning by the panel, with former Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and former Defense Secretary William Cohen asked to explain why their colleagues had failed to eliminate the Qaida network and take Osama bin Laden into custody.

But the harsher questioning, from Democrats and Republicans alike was reserved for Rumsfeld, especially after he and Secretary of State Colin Powell acknowledged in testimony that they had been aware of intelligence reports in 2001 warning of the especially dire terrorist threat against the United States.

The 10-member bipartisan commission is in the final weeks of its investigation. And while the panel has held other hearings in recent months, the questioning Tuesday of four top officials of the Bush and Clinton administrations offered the most exhaustive public examination of diplomatic and military failures in the years before Sept. 11.

"There was a good deal of concern," Rumsfeld said, referring to the intelligence warnings shared throughout senior levels of the administration in the months before Sept. 11. "It was certainly not business as usual."

He and Powell said that the government had spent much of 2001 devising a comprehensive policy not just to contain al-Qaida, but also to destroy it, even, perhaps, by eventually using ground troops in Afghanistan. Rumsfeld questioned what more the Bush administration could have done. "'Even if Bin Laden had been captured or killed in the weeks before Sept. 11, no one I know believes it would necessarily have prevented Sept. 11," he said.

President Bush joined in the defense of the administration's performance, telling reporters after a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday that if "my administration had any information that terrorists were going to attack New York City on September the 11th, we would have acted. We have been chasing down al-Qaida ever since the attacks."

The Bush administration has refused to discuss details of the Oval Office intelligence briefings in the months before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. The reports, known as the President's Daily Brief, are among the most highly classified documents in the executive branch. *New York Times News Service*

US plans to send high-level team to Mideast to salvage peace talks

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush said Tuesday he hopes to send high-level emissaries to the Middle East next week to see if anything can be done to revive derailed Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. He also expressed concern about a Hamas threat against the United States.

"We take every threat seriously in this administration," Bush told reporters after the Islamic militant group threatened retaliation against both the United States and Israel to protest Israel's assassination of Hamas' founder.

"I worry about terrorist groups targeting America," Bush said. "Whether it be a Hamas threat or an al-Qaida threat, we take them very seriously."

"As far as the Middle East, it's a troubled region, and the attacks were troubling," Bush said. "There needs to be a focused, concerted effort by all parties to fight terror."

He said his administration remains committed to "a two-state solution" for both Israel and the Palestinians.

"To this end, if the circumstances on the ground allow, I'll be sending a team back to the Middle East next week to see if we can't keep the process alive, the process toward peace," Bush said.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Colin Powell expressed concern about the flare-up in fighting between Israel and the Palestinians and about reports that Israeli gunships had opened fire on gunmen in southern Lebanon.

"We are disturbed by the developments," Powell said. "We hope all parties will recognize the consequences of their actions."

Israel, he said, has a right to defend itself against threats from terrorists, like Hamas. But Powell said Israel should consider the consequences of its actions.

Bush spoke as Hamas elected as its new leader, a hard-liner who has pushed for accelerating attacks on Israel. That came a day after Israel assassinated Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin. Israel has threatened to kill the entire Hamas leadership ahead of a possible withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. *AP*

PALESTINIAN women from Hamas participate in a demonstration in front of the home of former Hamas leader Ahmed Yassin, who was killed a day earlier in an Israeli air strike, in Gaza City, Gaza Strip. Israel had long considered Yassin, to be culpable for bomb attacks inside Israel, which left hundreds of civilians dead. *AP*

Mayor Atienza, huwag mag hudas sa Pandacan Oil depot issue!

On 28 November 2001, Manila Ordinance No. 8027 was approved by Mayor Jose L Atienza Jr. It took effect fifteen (15) days from publication thereof in accordance with law. Publication was completed on 13 December 2001. Pursuant to Ordinance No. 8027, the oil companies have up to six months from effectivity of the ordinance or up to 28 June 2002 to move their storage facilities away from the Pandacan area, which was reclassified by the said ordinance from Industrial II to Commercial I.

On 26 June 2002, Mayor Atienza entered into a so-called Memorandum of Understanding, in violation of and contrary to the letter, spirit and intent of Ordinance No. 8027 and repeated the violation thereof by issuing the permit to Shell, Caltex and Petron to continue their operation in Pandacan.

Instead of performing his sworn duty to enforce Ordinance No. 8027, on 29 June 2002, Mayor Atienza granted a permit extending the oil companies' (Shell, Caltex and Petron) operations in the reclassified Pandacan area by another six (6) months or up to 31 December 2002.

In signing the Memorandum of Understanding, Mayor Atienza violated not only Ordinance No. 8027 but also the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act (Republic Act No. 3019, as amended) because his act constituted corrupt practices that are prohibited by Republic Act No. 3019.

After executing the Memorandum of Understanding, Mayor Atienza was criminally charged before the Office of the Ombudsman by Manila Councilor Benjamin D Asilo with violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

In December 2002, a petition for *mandamus* was filed by the Social Justice Society, Vladimir Alarique T Cabigao and Bonifacio Tumbokon with the Supreme Court to compel Mayor Atienza to enforce Ordinance No. 8027. Under the Local Government Code of 1991, enforcement of laws and ordinances is one of a local chief executive's ministerial functions.

The Office of the Ombudsman has prepared an Evaluation Report for the indictment of Mayor Atienza for violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act regarding the Pandacan oil depot issue. It was submitted by Roy Roque D A Dator, reviewed by Gerardo B Lantoria Jr., recommended for approval by Edward Harun V Pagunsan, and approved by Margarito P Gervacio Jr, the acting Ombudsman at the time.

However, for unknown reasons, the Evaluation Report was never released. Thus, Mayor Atienza remains scot-free for his criminal act on the Pandacan oil depot issue.

MAYOR LITO ATIENZA, BREAK OFF YOUR LOYALTY TO THE OIL COMPANIES, YOU ARE NOT FIT TO BE A MAYOR IF YOU COULD NOT IMPLEMENT LAWS AND ORDINANCES, OUST THE OIL DEPOT NOW!

UNITED FRONT TO OUST THE OIL DEPOT (UFO-OD) and the more than 3,000 signatories supporting the advocacy of the UFO-OD

Alliance for Youth Solidarity, Akbayan, Akbay Maralita, Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), Barangay 835, Zone 91, Baranagay 844, Zone 92, Bible Readers Society of the Philippines – PUP Chapter, Concerned Citizens of Pandacan and Tondo, Kabataang Aksyon Para sa Kaunlaran ng Bayan, PUP Peer Counselors Association, Philippine Society of Emergency Medical Technicians, St. Peter's Parish, PUP Multisectoral Alliance to Oust the Oil Depot, Bukluran ng Kabataan Laban sa Oil Depot – PUP, United Fire Fighters of the Philippines, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Pandacan Neighborhood Association

Paid Advt.

US warns Americans overseas of increased terrorist threats

WASHINGTON—The state department issued a worldwide advisory warning Americans overseas of increasing threats from terrorist organizations such as Hamas and al-Qaida.

The state department cited growing threats from Hamas against American interests abroad since Israel's killing of the group's spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, on Monday.

The recent terrorist attack in Madrid, Spain, and continuing assaults against American targets in the Middle East also prompted the advisory which was issued Tuesday. It updated a similar warning issued last Friday.

US government facilities abroad remain at a heightened state of alert and may temporarily close from time to time to gauge security threats, the state department said. It urged Americans abroad to monitor the local news and maintain contact with the nearest US Embassy or consulate.

The department also issued travel advisories Tuesday for the Middle East and North Africa, Israel and Iraq.

Credible information indicates terrorist groups may be planning attacks against American targets in the Middle East, the department said.

The security situation in Iraq is dangerous and the threat to all Americans there remains extremely high, the department said.

Americans are urged to depart from Gaza as soon as possible and to defer travel to Israel. The department also encouraged Americans in Israel to avoid public places and crowded areas. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Spain, Morocco team up for blast probe

MADRID—They eye each other warily, separated by a strip of choppy water and a boatload of gripes. Now, however, relations between Spain and Morocco are growing closer in the wake of the Madrid terror bombings. Ties between the two countries have verged on poisonous in recent years because of disputes over fishing rights in Moroccan waters, illegal immigration into Spain and two dusty, centuries-old Spanish enclaves perched on Morocco's coast. In the summer of 2002, the ill-will nearly boiled over into a military clash over a rocky islet inhabited only by goats nibbling on wild parsley. But with six Moroccans charged with mass killings in the Madrid attacks, the two Mediterranean neighbors are taking a different tack, scrambling to exchange information and expertise. Agents have crisscrossed the narrow Strait of Gibraltar to help each other investigate an alleged Islamic terror cell based in Tangiers and with tentacles reportedly reaching far north to Madrid. *AP*

US envoy meets Libya's Gadhafi

TRIPOLI—The United States hailed talks between a senior US official and Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi on Tuesday as a sign of progress in relations since Tripoli decided to end weapons of mass destruction programs. US Secretary of State Colin Powell said William Burns, a top US state department aide and the highest member of an American government to visit Libya in more than 30 years, had had "good discussions" with Gadhafi, once reviled in Washington. "It shows that we are moving ahead with the political road map that we laid out with the Libyans as a result of their determination to give up their weapons of mass destruction," Powell told reporters in Washington. Official sources said Burns handed Gadhafi a letter from President George W. Bush on ways to improve the two countries' ties. *Reuters*

Taiwan's opposition OKs vote recount law

TAIPEI—Taiwan's biggest opposition party said Wednesday that it would consider a proposed law ordering a quick recount for last weekend's presidential election—a major step toward resolving a political crisis sparked by the disputed vote. Thousands of protesters have been demanding a recount since Nationalist candidate Lien Chan narrowly lost to President Chen Shui-bian in Saturday's election, which the opposition says was marred by voting irregularities and an unexplained election-eve shooting. Unless the two sides can agree on how to trigger a recount, the crisis could drag on for months while the courts decide whether votes must be retallied. *AP*

Kim Jong-il meets Chinese diplomats

SEOUL—Reclusive North Korean leader Kim Jong-il granted a rare meeting Wednesday with China's visiting foreign minister as the communist allies discussed the North Korean nuclear weapons crisis in a visit Beijing has described as a "very important contact." Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, who arrived Tuesday, is the first foreign minister from Beijing to visit the North in five years. The visit is seen as bolstering the push for a third round of six-nation talks, as efforts to organize working level groups hang in limbo. As Pyongyang's last major ally, China has taken on the role of host and coordinator of the meetings. *AP*

World leaders to attend state funeral for Madrid blast victims

MADRID — World leaders are joining Spain at a state funeral for the 190 victims of the Madrid terrorist bombings—an extraordinary tribute triggered by a nation's unprecedented pain.

King Juan Carlos and the rest of the royal family will lead mourners Wednesday in the midday Mass at Almudena Cathedral for those killed in 15 hellish minutes on March 11, when bombs concealed in backpacks ripped through crowded commuter trains during the morning rush hour.

Spaniards have braved Basque separatist attacks for decades, and the highest death toll was 21 in 1987. But the rail attacks, in which Islamic extremists are the prime suspects, have dwarfed that figure. Besides the dead, more than 1,800 people were injured. The massacre is being called Spain's Sept. 11.

Presiding over the Mass will be the archbishop of Madrid, Cardinal Antonio Rouco Varela.

"To kill your own kind, to kill a brother, is to attack God himself," Rouco Varela said in a memorial service last week at the cathedral, a 19th-century granite structure next to the Royal Palace in Madrid's old quarter.

The magnitude of the national trauma has prompted the first state funeral for people outside the royal family in the history of Spain's new democracy, restored after longtime dictator Gen. Francisco Franco died in 1975. The last state funeral was held in 2000 for the king's mother, Mercedes de la Merced.

The attacks were the worst to target a Western country since the suicide airliner attacks in New York and Washington in 2001, and sent shock waves through European capitals fearful that the continent will become the next battleground for Islamic terrorists.

The outpouring of sympathy from around the globe is reflected in the list of VIPs scheduled to attend the funeral—President Jacques Chirac of France, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Britain's Prince Charles, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and more than a dozen other heads of state or government. Secretary of State Colin Powell will represent the United States, and former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori is also due to attend.

KING CARLOS

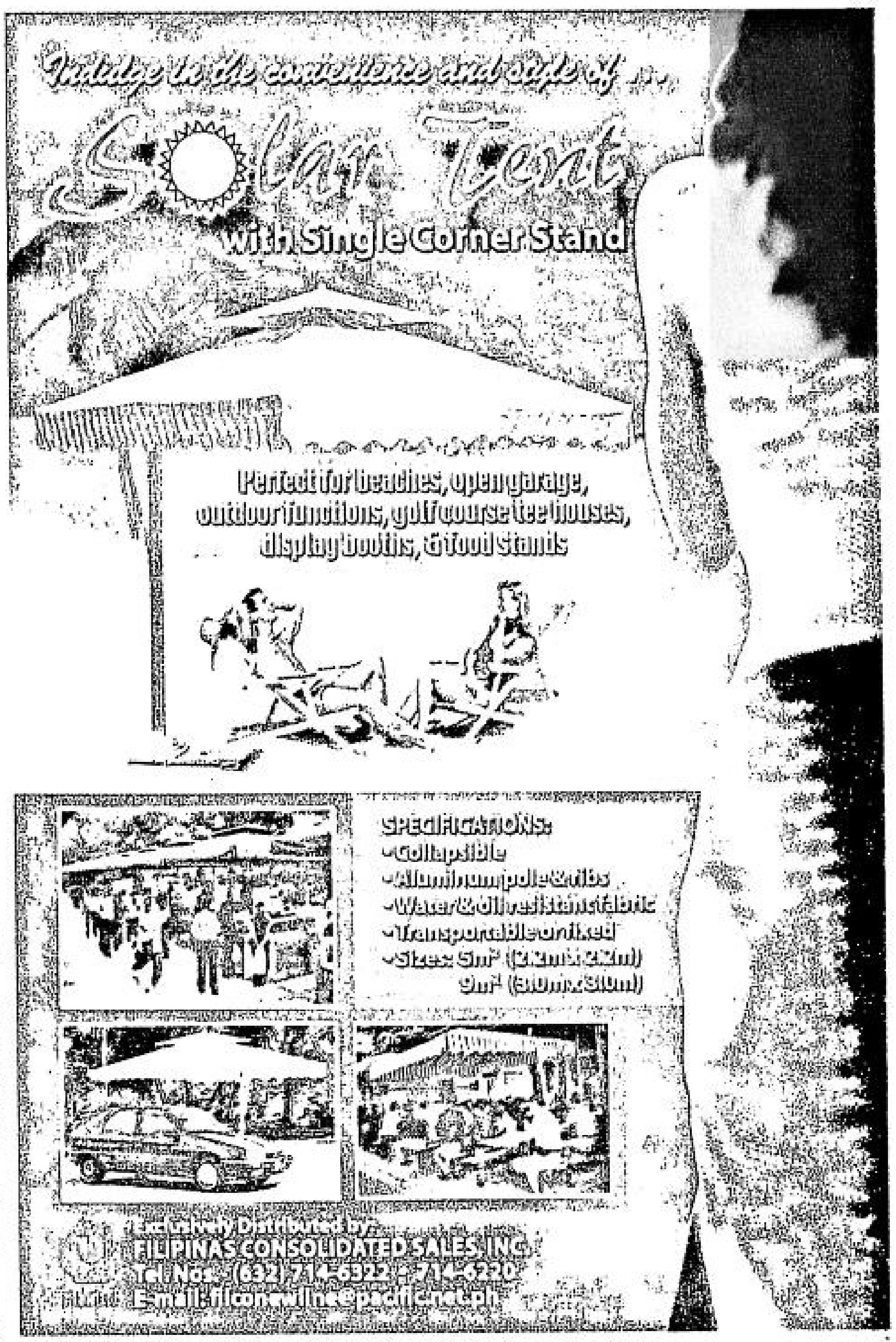
Police will pour on extra security at Madrid's two airports, roads leading into the city and along the route leading motorcades to the cathedral.

"Security forces are working together closely to make Madrid an armored city," said Francisco Javier Ansuategui, the interior ministry's top official for the Madrid region.

The Mass is almost certain to bring much of Madrid to a standstill. Giant-screen TVs to carry the ceremony live have been set up in a cobblestone courtyard outside the cathedral, in a Royal Palace garden and in Puerta del Sol, a bustling plaza where one of several makeshift memorials to the victims sprang up the day after the bombings. The youngest victim was a baby girl, aged 7 months.

The monument features a sea of red candles, newspaper clippings about victims, a sprinkling of teddy bears and photographs.

One black-and-white shot showed a young man, identified only by his first name, Javier, smiling as his small daughter and son sat on his lap. *AP*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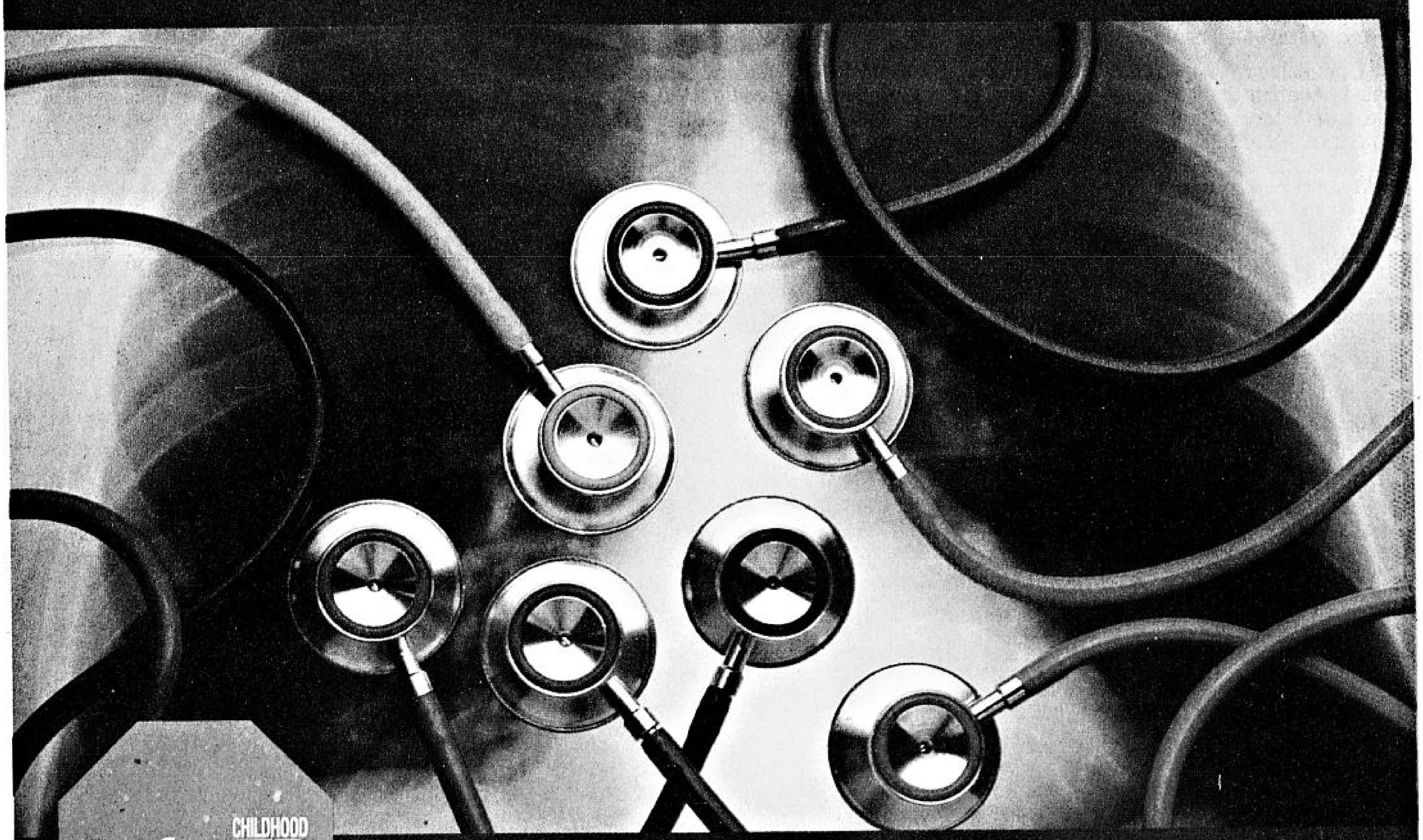

CHILDHOOD DefeaTB supports World TB Day 2004.

March 24 is the anniversary of Dr. Robert Koch's 1882 discovery of the TB bacillus, one of the world's top infectious killers. Today, on World TB Day, we continue the fight Dr. Koch has started and we encourage everyone to do something to stop TB.

Be Informed!
Despite the advancements in medical science, TB continues to kill as many as 75 Filipinos each day.* TB is so widespread in our country that it is believed that 30 million Filipinos are already infected.* With this kind of number, no one is safe from TB.

Be vigilant!
We, at Pediatrica's DefeaTB movement challenge everyone to be vigilant in the fight against TB. We urge doctors to promote TB testing to their patients and parents to have their families screened for the TB infection. With everyone's active involvement, we can put a stop to this killer disease.

A message of concern from
PEDIATRICA, INC.
THE PEDIATRIC SPECIALIST

*"More to worry about than SARS." From At Large by Rina Jimenez David, May 1, 2003, Philippine Daily Inquirer

ISSN
0116-2642
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Vol. 19 No. 108
Email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph website: http://www.inq7.net

OPINION

THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, INC. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 /
528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.

Publisher **ISAGANI YAMBOT**
Editor in Chief **LETTY JIMENEZ-MAGSANOC**
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Not a piece of candy

EDITORIAL

NOW it turns out that the possibility of the government recovering the P1.3 billion it paid to Mega Pacific eSolutions Inc. for the aborted deal involving automated counting machines is dim. The corporation's lawyer is on record as saying that it will not come across with the amount despite the demand letter from the Office of the Solicitor General. From reports, the general tone of Alfredo Lazaro Jr. amounts to this: So sue us.

Which is what the OSG is planning on doing (never mind that in these maddening times, when it seems like the body politic is lurching from one crisis or scandal to another without the sweet prospect of resolution, the idea is occasion for cold comfort). As though to emphasize President Macapagal-Arroyo's avowed determination to recover the money, Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo is reviewing the contract between the Commission on Elections and Mega Pacific and preparing the civil suit for filing in a week's time. The possible criminal liability of all parties concerned, including the Comelec officials who awarded the contract to a group that was, as records show, incorporated only after it was deemed qualified to bid, is quite another matter and falls within the purview of the Office of the Ombudsman.

Lazaro declared on television early Wednesday that his principals were open to a "reasonable settlement" with the government, meaning that, if terms were mutually agreeable, the case did not necessarily have to end up in the clogged recesses of the courts. He went on to say, bare-faced, that he was "apprehensive" about the prevailing terminology: say, "returning" the money, considering that, in his estimation, "there is nothing to return."

This was how the lawyer put it to his interviewer: "The way you say it, it's as if we were duty-bound to return the money. You have to understand our position. We did not give a piece of candy here. We delivered... We also infused money here, and it's not quite correct that we milked the government with this transaction."

No, it was not a piece of candy that Mega Pacific delivered to the Comelec but automated counting machines that, the Supreme Court said in its ruling last January, exhibited these distinctive failures: to achieve the "accuracy rating" of 99.9995 percent that the Comelec had itself set; to detect "previously downloaded results" at various canvassing or consolidation levels and to prevent these from being inputted again; and to print the "statutorily required audit trails of the count/canvass at different levels without any loss of data."

Not a piece of candy but instruments envisioned, ideally and by law, to reflect the true will of the people as to their choice of leaders, and to pluck the country from its benighted state of manual voting.

Not a piece of candy but merchandise supplied according to a contract awarded in clear violation of the Comelec's own requirements: for bidders to submit financial statements for the past three years, to show records of an IT project with a value of P100 million and to produce counting machines that have been used in at least one exercise involving no less than 20 million voters.

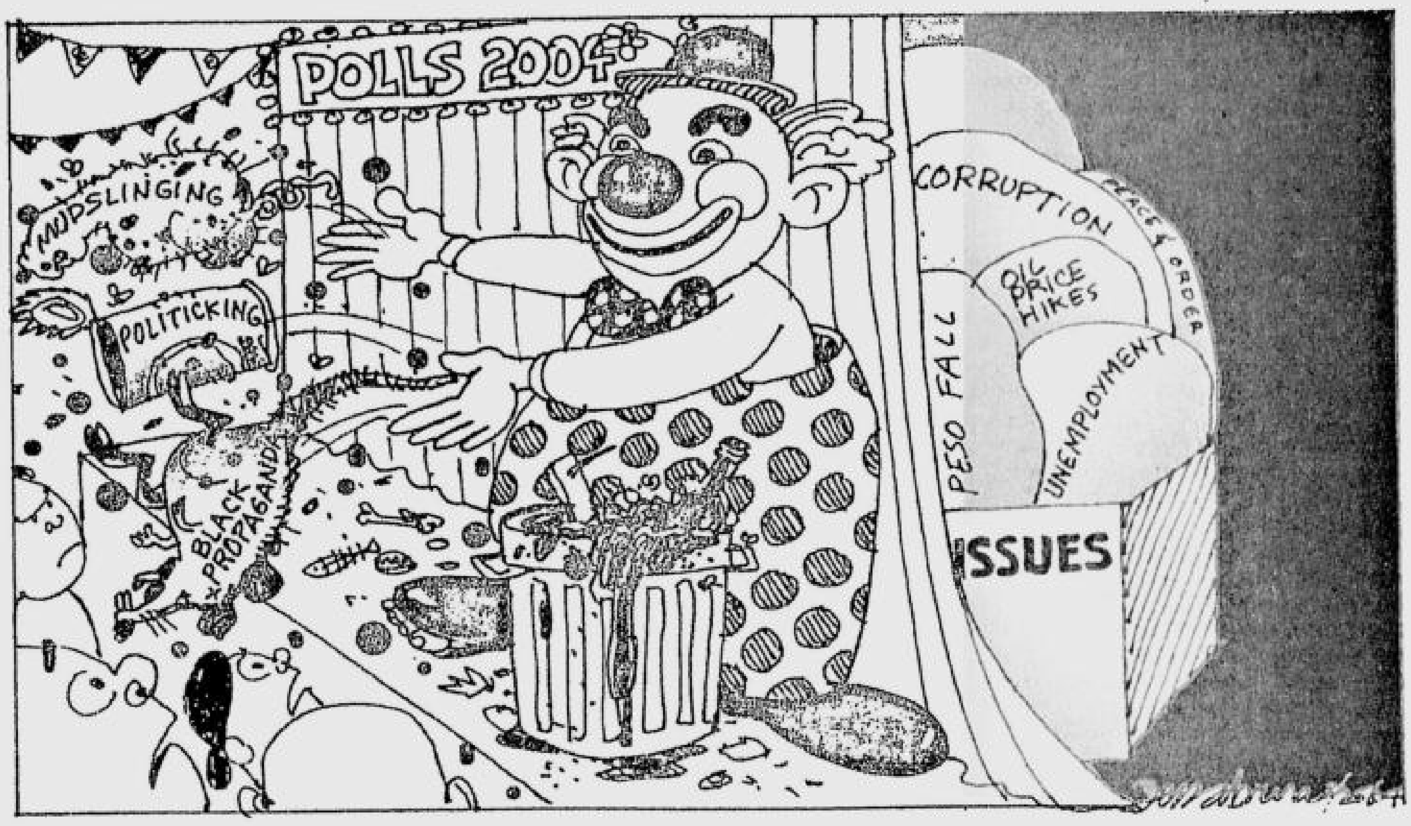
And to think that Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos has yet to receive from Malacañang so much as a slap on the wrist for this shocking episode. The man is behaving as though he had nothing to do with this scandalous situation, even announcing blithely that Mega Pacific was demanding an additional P200 million in payment.

Abalos was besieged with loud calls for his resignation in the wake of the Supreme Court decision voiding the contract with Mega Pacific, but this Macapagal appointee has ably proven his capacity to hang tough. The calls for him to quit petered out in the din generated by subsequent scandals, but it's time to revive them.

Yes, it's time to wrench at least part of the collective attention from that other billion-peso stinker, the government's takeover of the Maynilad Water Services and refocus on the Comelec-Mega Pacific deal. It may have been voided, but the smell won't go away.

It's obviously going to stay until Abalos and other responsible officials of the Comelec are brought to the dock, to heel, if necessary. And it's going to smell even worse as the days wear on and the P1.3-billion "candy" disappears completely.

The government has to account for that money or there will be hell to pay.



Water brawls

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"WHISKEY'S for drinkin'," Mark Twain once wrote. "But water is for fightin' over."

Twain's comment plays out in the brawl over the President's plan to bail out debt-strapped Maynilad Water Services Inc.

Vice presidential candidates Herminio Aquino and Loren Legarda flayed government for assuming P6 billion in concession IOUs. They'd be swapped for 61 percent of Maynilad.

Quid for that quo, they claim, is backing for the President by Lopez "battalions," i.e ABS-CBN and Manila Electric Co. Indeed, the issue is worth "fightin' over."

But for yokels, like us, the concern is: dry taps. There's no substitute for water. And it's too important to leave with politicians.

A perspective beyond the next elections, however, is sketched out in "Water In Asian Cities," just published by Asian Development Bank.

The monograph compares how 18 Asian cities—from Delhi and Jakarta to Manila and Tashkent—turn on taps for spiraling populations.

Part of ADB's 10-monograph series "Water For All," the study also analyzes how civil societies see their role in improving water services.

Water firms in Asia, the study found, perform "marginally better" today than in 1997—and in "certain limited aspects." Consumer satisfaction is up, resources management improved. But gains in service coverage were minimal. Losses from leaks and theft persist. Overall financial management worsened.

Poor families suffer from shoddy supply, despite widespread understanding how improved water reduce poverty.

Look at Manila: A creaky 33-year-old Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System serves a population of 16.1 million, with only 955,500 connections.

MWSS operations were turned over, in 1997, to two private firms: the Ayala-owned and better-managed Manila Water Co. in the east zone, and the controversial Maynilad in the west.

"Privatization... has not resulted in expected improvement," the study found, although the "concessionaire for the east zone performed better, especially in coverage, non-revenue water reduction and financial management."

Overall supply coverage is only 58 percent. Manila thus joins other tail-enders, including Ulaan Bataar, Karachi and Jakarta.

Supply gaps result in 23 out of every 100 homes depending on "small-scale providers," i.e. often ambulant peddlers, trundling tricycles loaded with five-gallon canisters.

Vendors ply a similar trade in Karachi, Jakarta and Kathmandu—and Philippine cities like Cebu and Lapu-Lapu. Not so in Hong Kong or Colombo, where all homes have faucets.

The poor buy peddled unsafe water at rates 12 to 25 times higher than those coming out from faucets. "We pay more for our cholera," says a Good Shepherd nun who lives in a city slum.

Manila households linked to sewerage is 7 percent. Sewerage access in Dhaka is 30 percent, in Kuala Lumpur 80 percent.

"Implications of water sources pollution need to be addressed," the report says. (Read: It's a question of time before epidemics erupt.)

Water flows all day round for 88 percent of those linked to Manila's system. "Dhaka, Khatmandu and Karachi have no areas with 24-hour supply." But all of Shanghai and Phnom Penh do.

"Non-revenue water" is that which leaks away, is swiped or unaccounted for. "The worst examples for NRW are Manila (62 percent), Colombo (55 percent)," the report notes. Better performers : Osaka (7 percent); Shanghai (17 percent).

In its 1997 "Second Water Utilities Book," the ADB compared 50 water firms in 31 cities.

In Cebu, it reported, coverage then was 23 percent, now jacked up to 52 percent. Water flowed for 19 hours a day. Bleary-eyed housewives would rise after midnight to nurse trickles into pots and pans. Today, only 10 percent, mostly in hilly environs, don't get whole-day supply.

"Davao built a well-managed utility with good performance parameters," the ADB said. Homes had water round the clock. Non-revenue losses were cut to 31 percent. Cebu's 38 percent is down to 31 percent today.

Reformed water, management mechanisms must give priority to the poor, civil society groups insist. Other NGOs argue for pricing water at its economic value and citizen participation in policy decisions.

But "civil society is not yet a powerful force for reform in the region," the report adds. They do have drive that lackadaisical public agencies lack. Their "significant knowledge" provides perceptive insights.

In denuded countries like the Philippines, myths like limitless water sweep the problem under the rug. But the reality is: profligate use continues and shortages are emerging.

Internal renewable water resources is 4,476 liters for Filipinos, the UNDP's Human Development Report notes. For Malaysians, it's 21,259. "Dig the well before you get thirsty," our elders counseled.

A world-class research institution, like San Carlos University's Water Resources Center, doesn't shoot from the hip. But at the rate aquifers collapse from overpumping, "one must be prepared, in 10 years' time, for water riots in Cebu," cautions its director, Fr. Hermann van Engelen, SVD.

"Water in Asian Cities" reminded me of Fatihphurshakri, an eerie city, on a side road, 29 kilometers from the majestic Taj Mahal. It's castles shimmer in the Indian sunset. But every room is deserted. And your footsteps echo in empty halls. They match the harsh cries of crows, circling its vacant ramparts.

Fatihphurshakri city died when its water cisterns ran dry.

* * *

(E-mail : juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

Moral dilemmas

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

IT'S like the two Edsas. Each time they come, we undergo a ritual of lamenting the extent of their failing to live up to their promise. It's true, they haven't. Graduation offers a similar ritual. Each time it comes, at about this time of year, we undergo the ritual of lamenting the extent to which the graduates will fail to live up to their promise. That promise being able to find a job within the near, or even distant, future.

The air is filled with the same lament these days, helped in no small way by the topnotcher of the board exams for medicine, Elmer Jacinto, declaring his intention to work as a caregiver in New York. He has already bagged a contract there, and will be off soon. Several editorials in print and on air have pointed out how many graduates are not likely to be able to work after graduation, given the current rate of joblessness, a rate that is worse this year than last year, and will be probably be worse next year than this year. With the peso plunging to record lows, and probably going into free fall after the elections, and with many industries closing down from the brunt of globalization, the bulk of graduates may have to set their sights abroad to show something for their pains.

The premise of this, of course, is that people study to be able to work. It is that the purpose of education is to find a job and live a reasonably secure, if not comfortable, life.

I am not totally unsympathetic to the idea. Having come from a poor family myself and subsisted on scholarships, I am aware of the pressures that go with schooling. Parents do expect their kids to be able to get a good job after graduation to help them in their obligations. I am lucky in that we were only three kids, and my elder brother subsisted on scholarships as well. My father died early, when I was in second-year high school. So there was only our mother to take care of.

I recall, however, that the other scholars in the dorm where I boarded felt the pressure far more than I. They had bigger families and having gotten farther ahead than their siblings, they were expected to be their families' stepping stone to a better life. The dazzling irony is that it was this same group that would take to activism as fish to water, to the monumental chagrin, or wrath, of their parents, who felt betrayed. Even more monumentally because some of them died or were jailed after martial law. But that's another story, one full of tragedy and heroism.

I am not entirely unsympathetic to Jacinto, even if the course he has taken is one I would not encourage others to take, or indeed one I would criticize bitterly. You have people depending on you, who continue to live in a place where kids routinely hear bursts of gunfire from their classrooms along with the stream of wisdom from their teachers, you would also think twice before making blithe decisions. Great if you can take the path of heroism and self-sacrifice, but it is at least understandable if you can't.

But having said all this, I don't know that we aren't doing ourselves a monumental disservice—or harm—by having a resolutely utilitarian concept of education: We teach in order to produce workers. Or from the perspective of the student: I learn in order to work. Indeed, not just a utilitarian concept of education but a narrow utilitarian one: We teach in order to produce people who will find employment. Or from the perspective of the student: I learn in order to be hired.

The entire thrust of our education is already veering in that direction. Students are being taught only skills that are likely to enable them to land a job somewhere. Preferably elsewhere: That is how English is being taught—not as a language you can read great literature with or gain much wisdom from but as a language with which to communicate with your foreign boss and gain advantage over the nationals of other countries who are competing with you for the boss' favor. I know that is an option in life, but that is not the only option there is. And I don't know that reducing education only to that option isn't infusing servility into the deepest parts of our national soul. I don't know that it is making us believe that we are beggars and beggars cannot be choosers.

Other Asian countries do not think that way. Of course, they also aim to produce highly skilled professionals for their own work force or the global market, but they do not limit education to that. They also aim to produce people with enterprise and initiative and imagination. The joke goes that a Pinoy graduate will ask a fellow graduate when they meet, "What job have you found?" while a Chinoy graduate will ask a fellow graduate when they meet, "What company have you formed?" It is not a joke at all. That is true in many parts of Southeast Asia. Students do not study just so they can work for a boss, local or foreign. They study so they can be their own boss.

And even that, from where I stand, remains a limited, if not wasteful, view of education. Maybe it's my activist background, but though I have felt enormous pressure to think that way, being a proletarian, or one who owns no property but lives solely by his wits, I have not succumbed to it. I confess I have been tempted mightily many times, not least by frustration over our collective capacity to make a mess of this country, but I have not succumbed to it. To this day, my attitude is that I work to learn, not I learn to work. Life is too precious to be harnessed to making money, or gaining material abundance. You can always live simply instead of giving in to consumerism, and gain abundance in other, better, ways.

Its virtue is that you never really stop learning. Learning is the end, not the means. To this day, I still am

GMA the candidate to beat

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE RIVALS of President Macapagal-Arroyo are throwing everything in her direction. Two senatorial candidates of Fernando Poe Jr. have asked for her disqualification before the Supreme Court on the ground that she is spending enormous government resources in her campaign. A senatorial candidate of Raul Roco has filed a case against GMA and several Cabinet and Lopez Group officials in connection with the government takeover of the bankrupt Maynilad Water Services, charging grave abuse of authority on the government's part. Panfilo Lacson and Eddie Villanueva have also directed all their fire against GMA. Judging from all this, it's obvious that 45 days before the elections Gloria is the candidate to beat. But her rivals should realize that doing so only generates sympathy for her.

* * *

FPJ recently snubbed a forum organized by farmers' and peasants' groups at the UP campus. They had come from various parts of the country to hear directly from him what he has to offer them, but instead he sent former Agriculture Secretary Salvador Escudero, a senatorial candidate in his ticket. A news report found this inconsistent, considering that these poor sectors are FPJ's natural constituency. What's becoming very obvious is that the actor-turned politician is deadly afraid of speaking in public, be it on stage, TV or radio. This is doubtless due, not to stage fright, but to his own realization that he has nothing to offer on issues; that he is woefully unprepared to become president. That FPJ could be thrust upon this country as president is truly a scary scenario, and it behooves us all, including politicians with any love for country, to do everything to dissuade his fans from wasting their vote on him.

* * *

I'm heartened, though, to realize that more and more of the *masa* are now coming to their senses, and it may be only a question of talking to them about the stark realities. At the concert of Swiss accordionist-singer Celina Ramsauer at the Alliance Francaise recently to celebrate the 9th annual Francophonia Week, poetry's high priestess Virgie Moreno related to me that in her interviews of taxi drivers in recent weeks, they all affirmed they were not voting for FPJ. According to her, the cab drivers stressed that they are better educated than he, most of them being high school graduates, and yet they know they cannot tackle being president.

I agree with Pulse Asia chief Felipe Miranda that the biggest baggage of FPJ is his bosom buddy Joseph Estrada. As my supermarket bag boy put it, "*Ayaw ko hong bumoto sa artista. Dala na kami.*" But it still is necessary for the intelligentsia to conduct a political education of the *masa* as many of them are still star-struck.

* * *

Last Saturday, friends and relatives of the late Speaker Ramon V. Mitra, led by his widow, Cecile Blanco-Mitra, and his political heir, reelectionist Rep. Abraham Mitra, gathered at his tomb at the "parola" in Puerto Princesa for his fourth death anniversary. Over the years, my husband and I have joined the Mitra family on this occasion, and each time I appreciate the beautiful spot chosen by Monching himself as his final resting place. It commands a panoramic view of the Sulu Sea, the Puerto Princesa Bay and the mountains, and small fishing boats constantly pass in review, as it were. Now the burial site has become a people's park, with flowering shrubs and trees.

* * *

For this year's remembering, Monching's cousin, radio-TV executive Lourdes Ilustre, recruited three people close to him to talk about various facets of his life. Former Natural Resources Undersecretary Benito Bengzon, who served as the chief of staff of his volunteers in a campaign, spoke about Mitra's personal side and recalled his humility, simplicity and kindness. For instance, Mitra staunchly refused to file a protest after he was cheated of victory in the senatorial elections of 1995, because it would "hurt a number of good friends who had already spent quite a bit in their campaigns." Bengzon also recalled how Mitra gave way to Cory Aquino in the snap elections of 1985, and how he never spoke ill of his friend, Eduardo Cojuangco, even if bashing the Marcos crony was quite popular in those post-Ninoy years. Mitra wanted to be a "healing president," and had he won, said Bengzon, perhaps all the political strife we have now wouldn't be there.

* * *

Amor Abueg, former representative, governor and Comelec commissioner, reinforced the stories of Mitra's kindness by recalling an incident involving the inveterate cockfighter and breeder. Abueg recalled that in one cockfighting session during which four of Mitra's cocks won successively, he noticed an old man in one corner holding a cock and looking quite sad. When asked, the old man told Mitra that he had a cock but could only bet P20. Then and there Mitra arranged a fight between his fifth cock and the man's, but forbade his people from betting. Then he fixed the *tari* on his cock, in such a way that it lost to the old man's cock. The latter went home a bit richer and with Mitra's cock.

Abueg stressed how Mitra demonstrated his devotion to Palawan by authoring, together with former Rep. David Ponce de Leon, RA 7611, the Strategic Environmental Plan for Palawan, which became the blueprint for its long-term development. Signed by Cory Aquino after he lost the presidential elections, RA 7611 is the only comprehensive environmental plan for a province (it was authored in the Senate by Sen. Heherson Alvarez), and created the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development, which, in turn, spawned many agencies now aiding Palawan.

Abueg also recalled that Mitra would return savings of the House he headed for six years. After his death, a second building in the Batasan complex was named after the late Speaker.

(To be continued.)

More rice with SRI

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

ONE unforgettable one-liner that I heard a long time ago from farmers and which made me laugh was: "*Hindi na kami magsasaka, magsasako na.*" (We're no longer rice farmers, we're now rice sack dealers.) That's one pun that gets totally lost in translation because the punch rests on one vowel of a Filipino word. Forget it if you don't understand Filipino.

The letter O of "*magsasako*" might as well be a fat zero, meaning empty. Empty sacks. Where have all the *palay* gone?

There are a myriad reasons for troubled rice yields, rice shortages and vanishing rice varieties. One could blame wanton land conversion, chemical poisoning of the soil, wrong government agricultural priorities, overpopulation, environmental destruction and multinationals who play god. Name it.

But there's hope for the *palay*. There is hope in SRI or system of rice intensification. Its Filipino practitioners have coined a Filipino name for it: Sipag-Palay or "*ang sistema ng pagpapalago ng palay.*"

Well-known SRI proponent Norman T. Uphoff, director of Cornell International Institute for Food Agriculture and Development, was here last week to speak and listen to SRI farmers. Uphoff, who had been here several times before, was the speaker at the Third National SRI Conference organized by the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement, the Philippine Greens, Pabinhi, Broad Initiatives for Negros Development and SRI-Pilipinas.

SRI, I learned, had its beginnings in Madagascar in the 1980s. Jesuit Fr. Henri de Laulanie, who lived among farmers there for three decades, helped develop a way to increase rice yield from 50 cavans per hectare to 144 cavans per hectare. In some cases, the yield even reached as high as 200 to 300 cavans. This was possible even in soil that was not fertile and without using modern rice varieties and chemical fertilizers, and even with very little water.

Straight out of a biblical parable? No, it's straight out of Madagascar and now several countries in Africa and Asia, including the Philippines.

SRI practices were first tested outside Madagascar in 1999 at Nanjing University in China and later by the Agency for Agricultural Research and Development in Indonesia.

Let me share some info on SRI that I've read and learned.

SRI is a system, not a technology, because it is not set or fixed. It has to be tested and adapted to particular conditions. If practiced skillfully, it is possible to increase rice produce by 50 to 100 percent, and in cases where initial production level is low, the increase could go as high as 200 to 300 percent.

The objective of SRI is not to maximize rice yield but rather to achieve "higher productivity" from the factors of production, namely, land, labor, capital and water. Increased productivity should benefit farmers and consumers, the poorer ones especially, while practices remain environmentally friendly and sustainable. Yields vary depending on skill and the soil biota and other conditions.

The principles underlying SRI, it is to be stressed, are more important than the practices themselves. The practices that follow from these principles differ dramatically from age-old practices.

The principles: Rice is not an aquatic plant. (It does not really thrive best in a watery setting.) Rice seedlings lose much of their growth if transplanted more than 15 days after they have emerged from the nursery. During transplanting, avoid trauma especially to the roots. Wider spacing will result in greater root growth. Soil aeration and organic matter create beneficial conditions for root growth.

The practices: Transplant seedlings when they are eight to 12 days old, when the plants have only two small leaves and the seed sacs are still attached to the roots. Transplant quickly and carefully, allowing only 15 to 30 minutes between uprooting from the nursery to planting in the field. Plant wide apart, with one seedling per hill, or two plants per hill in poor soil. Plant in a square pattern to facilitate weeding. Keep the soil well drained. Do early and frequent weeding. Add nutrients to the soil, preferably organic from compost or mulch.

One thing I learned from listening to all that, which I could apply to my own garden: Do not feed the plants, feed the soil that feeds the plants.

Known local SRI guru and practitioner Rene Jaranilla of Pabinhi shared his SRI experience in Guimaras. Practitioners of conventional agriculture dismiss SRI as too good to be true, he said. To prove his point, he gave a video presentation of the results of SRI practices. One of his examples was the sturdy rice variety that grew as high as six feet.

The first years of SRI are not easy. Transplanting very young seedlings could be tedious. Jaranilla showed ways how this could be made easier, like making seedlings grow in old wash basins that are easy to carry to the field. It is more labor intensive at first, but as farmers develop the skills, the third or fourth year could be a breeze.

For the late Father De Laulanie, SRI was a strategy not just for increasing rice production, but also for human resource development. Farmers who have experienced the benefits of SRI are urged to be more involved in their own development. They are encouraged to continue experimenting with spacing, water applications, weeding, etc. and discover what works best for them.

If you want to know more about SRI or Sipag-Palay, try contacting Vic Tagupa (0916-5104462) of Xavier University College of Agriculture or Noe Ysulat (0919-4068084) of Da-ati Kabacan who has produced more than 200 cavans per hectare. Or access http://www.cifad.cornell.edu/sri or contact ciifad@cornell.edu.

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Beyond cheating

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

RECENTLY I found myself talking to my secretary about the candidates in the city where she lives. The city has an incumbent mayor running for a second term against a veteran ex-mayor trying to make a comeback. I asked her about the chances of the main contenders. The incumbent, according to her, is popular with the "elite," while the former mayor is popular with the "*masa*." The former mayor, too, is quite popular in city hall, even though the incumbent has run a rather successful administration. Still, it looks like a close fight. "The problem," then, I confidently told her, "is that the city is something like 60 percent squatter, so the election will be decided by who can buy the most votes."

To my surprise, she disagreed. "The *masa* aren't like that anymore," she replied. "If they're offered money, they will take it, but they will vote for whom they want," she corrected me.

Her comment indicates to me that one of the most interesting things about this election remains to be studied and discussed. Unfortunately, it can't be studied and discussed with authority until after the elections, but whichever way the elections end up, it will help explain why the results turn out the way they did.

Sociologists like Randy David have pointed out that the "command vote" is increasingly a thing of the past. By "command vote" social scientists mean, of course, the traditional means politicians found to ensure their victory: using patronage and intimidation to ensure that large numbers of voters would go to the precincts to elect candidates they were instructed to support. The days when landlords had their tenants practicing filling out ballots for months on end before election day are gone; the traditional figures of authority are losing their grip on the population. People seem to be more independent. In an urban setting, as Mayor Jejomar Binay of Makati loves to point out with relish, there is no longer a Forbes Park, Dasmariñas Village, San Lorenzo Village, etc., command vote when it comes to household help.

Or rather, more people act independently today than they did in the past. But this doesn't mean there aren't new command votes. The Iglesia ni Cristo still issues instructions to the faithful come election time, and to the INC's political discipline should be added the phenomenon among evangelical churches ("Born Again" congregations), such as Bro. Eddie Villanueva's Jesus Is Lord Movement which has successfully elected party-list candidates in the past and is now running a surprisingly creditable presidential campaign. I suspect other "command votes" that are emerging are a military command vote, an OFW command vote (there are tens of thousands of Filipinos who depend on the generosity and hard work of their relatives abroad, and to these family members, the political views of their breadwinners must have clout), a fraternity command vote, and so on.

In general, though, it might just be revealed that the Filipino voter is much more of a free agent today when compared to the past. This helps explain why survey results are so volatile and tend to be surprising to professional politicians and media people. I recall one distinguished journalist explaining to her colleagues that the biggest question she has when it comes to surveys is how come the survey results seem so accurate, when they don't factor in cheating. In particular, the SWS hit the nail on the head when it came to the outcome of the 1998 presidential elections. And yet, the journalist asked, surely there was cheating, so why didn't it affect the survey results?

If, as my secretary asserts, most urban voters will gladly pocket bribes but go ahead and vote for the real candidate of their choice, this still means there are some who will vote for those they were bribed to support. This also means there are still the votes cast by flying voters, who are not on the electoral rolls but who vote anyway.

Could it be that fewer voters are being bribed? Prior to the 1998 elections, in examining the so-called "administration advantage" in national elections, I asserted that the biggest lesson of the 1992 presidential contest was that vote buying and cheating had gone wholesale instead of retail. Instead of trying to buy individual votes, politicians simply "massaged" the results, hence, "*dagdag-bawas*," which does to election results what unethical businessmen do to their books.

As it turned out, cheating on the level of the presidential race, according to those in the know, proved futile in 1998. This was due to the obvious advantages Joseph Estrada had in the campaign. His opponents were either intimidated into not bothering to try to cheat, or found their attempts to cheat thwarted by the large numbers that turned out to vote for him. Cheating could only have dented Estrada's numbers, but not reversed them.

The opposition this time around failed in creating an invincible bandwagon. But it hasn't failed in reviving the specter that has always haunted Lakas-CMD as an institution: the allegations that its victory in 1992 actually reversed the people's will. This suspicion has actually gotten all the opponents of the administration to band together to prevent cheating.

But what if urban Filipinos, at least, no longer sell their votes? What if retail cheating—vote buying and voting by flying voters—only makes sense, financially and strategically, in local elections where there are tight races? What if the Filipino electorate is more honest than everyone assumes? In other words, what if the election result mirrors the survey results? What will the professional politicians and media people say then?

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

Pieces of a dream

YOUNG BLOOD

Maje Purino

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

"THE REALITY is not exactly how the song started out to be, but it's not a bad song."

I took this line to heart some six years ago when I read one of Robert James Waller's books. Now for some unknown reason, it comes back to me with amazing clarity as it captures very well the turn of events in my life.

For as long as I can remember, I have always taken relationships, both old and new, seriously. I value friendship and people so much that I am even willing to go the extra mile for them. I take pleasure in the details, and I have learned to always look at things with a positive point of view and never to take anything, especially people, for granted.

Until about a year ago, I was connected to a radio station that plays the smoothest blend of cool jazz and rhythm and blues. Not only that, I was part of a team of the most dynamic and innovative event producers and organizers in the country. We staged the biggest concerts, stickering campaigns, the coolest gigs, street parties and premiere showings. And I felt like I was a part of a big, wholesome family. I practically spent most of my waking hours in that station. Some might say the job could be boring, but in truth, it was my passion for music that made me stay for five wonderful years.

It all started out as a small dream. Since I loved music, I had a strong urge to be a DJ. I made some silly attempts, from phoning requests for songs to participating in random auditions, and then I finally got a shot at the real thing.

I was care free. I didn't have to be ruffled by the eight-hour rush or beat deadlines. All I had to do was line up song after song for my four-hour shift and then I was free to go.

The last board work I had until it all ended was the best. I was handling sign on, from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. I would get up very early, get a cab and head for the station by the bay. I would choose most of my favorites from the play list, and after consuming a steaming cup of coffee and a couple of sticks of cigarettes, my working day was done.

Most of my friends envied me then. Though some of them would ask me casually when I would get a real job, meaning working in an office and not in a booth, sitting behind a desk and not a consul, for me it really didn't matter. I loved what I was doing and that made all the difference.

So for several years that was what I did, and I enjoyed every single minute of it. I made good friends from among those who initially made anonymous requests or some friendly callers who just couldn't sleep and wanted someone to talk to in the dead of the night, and I developed deep-rooted friendships with my colleagues and even considered some of my superiors as true mentors. I was happy. I was living my life like I had always wanted to. I had no regrets.

But just when everything was working perfectly and things came and went as expected, just when I was becoming comfortable, I was forced to take a detour. Two of my fellow jocks and I lost our jobs when the company decided to downsize the staff.

At first, I had this feeling of numb disbelief. Can something so familiar be suddenly gone without warning? Was I really beginning to tread on new waters? Was this destiny's way of making me look in another direction? I was swamped with questions, endless questions.

Now, almost a year later, I can still look back with fondness at the routine that I learned to take for granted. I realize now that everything happened in its own good time. I was in the field for seven years, but it wasn't until the last five that my taste in music matured to a finer tune, a better quality. And it was during my last years in radio that I had the most precious memories.

My point in all this is that we shouldn't close doors and be complacent about where we are. In life we have many dreams and there are as many opportunities for reaching them. One should not hemmed in by one or two realities but instead learn to explore possibilities. In my case, I was so contented with just being a disc jockey that I actually took myself for granted. I easily forgot what set me off to disc jockeying, and just because I was doing the same thing for so long, it became so ordinary that I actually began to wonder if this was all there was to living.

Now, I'm really happy for everything that happened to me and I am truly thankful to all those people who helped me grow. Because of what I have been through, I am not left wondering about what might have been. To paraphrase Waller, the reality is not what it started out to be, but it has its reasons for being.

The fact is, life is too big, too fleeting, too exciting for us to allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by just one dream. We have all the possibilities and potentials to make things real. It doesn't take much to get started; a lot of good sense and inspiration are enough to get us on our feet. As Paulo Coelho put it in "The Alchemist": If you want something so bad, it's like the rest of the world will conspire in your favor. It is the possibility of realizing dreams that makes life interesting.

Maybe I was just lucky to have had the opportunity of living one of my dreams. And that is one thing nobody can ever take away from me.

Maje Purino, 26, teaches Philosophy at the University of San Carlos in Cebu.

THEY SAID

Bad precedent

"What would stop other companies from seeking government's help once they find themselves in a deep financial hole like Benpres Holdings?"

—Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. president Sergio Ortiz-Luis, criticizing government's move to takeover debt-ridden Lopez-controlled Maynilad Water Services

Part of the deal

"They can't just retire in the middle of the game because they are losing now. They should know that risk and losses are part of the deal having been in business for a long time."

—Federation of Philippine Industries president Jesus Arranza on Maynilad Water Services' giving up its concession with the government taking over it

Profit and loss

"We have privatized profit. If it's profit, private. If it's loss, government and Filipino."

—Presidential bet Raul Roco on government's takeover of Maynilad Water Services

TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to
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Editor Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

Voters view presidential platforms (4)

THIS is the fourth issue of Talk of the Town that features voters' assessment of the stand of the presidential candidates on economic, political and social concerns.

In the three previous issues of this section we printed the voters' critique of the presidential candidates' views on population, globalization, food security, gay rights, poverty, unemployment, housing, insurgency, peace talks and the environment.

Today, we are focusing on corruption, pork barrel, Erap pardon, the national government's debt, education and health.

Corruption is related to the country's debts, quality of education and delivery of health services. It has been estimated that $204 billion (about P12 trillion) was lost to corruption between 1965 and 2001. This amount is more than enough to pay off the public sector debt of P5.4 trillion.

Because of the huge amount that goes to debt service every year, little is left in the national budget for education, health and other basic social services. Curbing corruption and restructuring the country's debts can help the government improve the delivery of social services.

In the next issue of Talk of the Town we will begin featuring the views of vice-presidential candidates Loren Legarda, Noli de Castro and Hermie Aquino on economic, political and social concerns.

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO · PAGE DESIGN BY ERNIE SAMBO

RP is perceived to be one of most corrupt countries

By Vincent T. Lazatin
Chair
Transparency and Accountability Network

Despite the anti-corruption platforms of the presidents in the post-Marcos era, the Philippines is still perceived to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world, consistently ranking in the bottom third of all countries surveyed for Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

Corruption continues to be a major campaign issue. In their responses to Talk of the Town, all the presidential candidate talk about increasing transparency in government. President Macapagal-Arroyo, Raul Roco, and Eddie Villanueva add that they will lead by example.

Beyond these motherhood statements, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Fernando Poe, Jr., and Villanueva give specifics.

Lacson says he will require members of his Cabinet and heads of agencies to sign a waiver to the bank secrecy law if charges of corruption are brought against them, which is the international standard in anti-money laundering laws worldwide.

Poe will involve citizens' groups to monitor government procurement and make this process public. This is already being implemented through the Government Procurement Reform Act (RA 9184), and therefore represents nothing new.

Villanueva wants to strengthen the judiciary and the Office of the Ombudsman and ensure that there are "no sacred cows" in government.

Erap pardon

If the courts find deposed President Joseph Estrada guilty, will the candidate grant him a pardon because it is within the power of the president to do so? This issue is not whether the candidate considers Estrada guilty or innocent of the crime of plunder because only the Sandiganbayan can determine that.

Ms Macapagal, Roco, and Poe dodge the issue by saying they will let the courts decide on Estrada's conviction. Lacson understands the question, but fumbles in his answer. He says that if Estrada is convicted on the basis of "preponderance of evidence, then pardon is impossible" (a criminal case, such as the one against Estrada, requires a much higher evidentiary standard: "proof beyond reasonable doubt"), but if the conviction is based on "political persecution" then a pardon will be considered. The ambiguity lies in Lacson giving himself the option of deciding if a conviction is based on "political persecution." Only Villanueva is categorical in saying that if Estrada is convicted, he cannot find a way to justify a pardon.

Pork barrel

Pork barrel is believed to be a great source of corruption for legislators. Each congressman is allotted about P65 million and each senator up to P100 million in pork barrel funds. Although audited by the Commission on Audit, pork barrel can still generate income for legislators when they connive with local officials and contractors. It is within the powers of the President to reject or veto a budget that requires mandatory congressional approval (i.e. intervention) for pork barrel funds.

On one end of the spectrum are Lacson and Villanueva who each say that they will do away with pork barrel. Lacson claims that as a senator, he gave up his allocation. Both Ms Macapagal and Roco will allow for the continuance of pork barrel. Ms Macapagal says that it is "an important instrument" for reforms and provides equal economic opportunities for the poor. Poe says nothing on this issue except that he will address it when he gets elected, thus avoiding taking a stand on a very controversial issue.

For more details on the candidates' anti-corruption platforms, visit the Transparency and Accountability Network's website at www.tan.org.ph and www.20-questions.com.

Eliminate illegitimate and onerous debts

By the Freedom from Debt Coalition

Among the presidential candidates, President Macapagal-Arroyo has the least credibility on the debt question, given the fiscal and debt management performance of her administration. Her administration holds the record for being the biggest borrower in the post-Marcos era.

In three years, the national government (NG) borrowed a total of P958.168 billion from both foreign and domestic sources. Total public debt (NG debt plus debts of government-owned and- controlled corporations) grew 76 percent from P3.058 trillion at the end of 2000 to P5.39 trillion as of the third quarter 2003.

Ping Lacson's proposal to "institute investor-friendly and predictable and consistent economic policies" as a way of addressing the debt problem proceeds from a faulty logic that the problem is not enough investments. Previous governments and the present one desperately courted investments, especially foreign capital. In the process, the government has entered into various agreements and granted incentives that have been grossly disadvantageous to the Philippine economy, plunging us into greater poverty and resulting in an even bigger "need" to borrow.

We need a thorough review of all investment policies and government contracts with private corporations, and overhaul of all policies and contracts detrimental to public interest.

Raul Roco talks about the need to broaden the tax base and ensure the equitable distribution of the tax burden to help cut the budget and pay the country's external debt. Yet he contradicts himself by proposing cuts on corporate taxes, clearly a regressive tax measure that favors the rich and will mean lesser revenues. What he hopes to do with this corporate tax break is to encourage more investments, and, with more investments, a better economy. This formula has been tried and has not worked. What the country needs is a truly progressive taxation system that provides greater tax relief to the poor.

Fernando Poe, Jr. drew much flak from the business community when he mentioned debt restructuring as a means of addressing the debt problem. Debt restructuring is not even a radical option and in fact is generally acknowledged even by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as one of the means available to heavily indebted countries for easing their debt burden. However, debt restructuring will not be offered to the Philippines by international creditors on a silver platter.

Hostage

These creditors will take as much as they can. And so long as the Philippine government is willing to be held hostage by international creditors, so long as the government insists on paying all "obligations" even the illegitimate, onerous and fraudulent debts, so long as the Philippine law on automatic appropriations for debt service is in place, the debt will remain a major obstacle to any effort to develop the economy.

We wonder why Ms Macapagal's mention of debt restructuring did not generate the same alarm bells in the business community. Does this mean they are so sure of her loyalty to foreign creditors?

Hopes for meaningful changes in the debt policy under an FPJ administration were dashed by the clarification of Rep. Francis Escudero, FPJ's spokesperson, that the actor's debt restructuring simply means stretching the maturities of loans and not debt repudiation. This is no different from Ms Macapagal's proposition. FPJ should not be cowed into submitting to the business elite and foreign creditors so early in the game.

Eddie Villanueva's bold announcement of a debt moratorium or a temporary suspension of debt payments is welcome. We hope, however, that this is not only courageous, populist rhetoric, but that it is accompanied by a rigorous understanding of the debt problem and an economic program that will lead us out of the debt trap.

The breathing space offered by a debt moratorium can be quickly wasted if not followed by a thorough audit of all outstanding debt, a policy of eliminating all illegitimate and onerous debts, a debt payments policy that is consistent with placing the highest priority on public spending for basic services, stringent regulations on borrowings and economic policies that will strengthen our domestic economy and rid us of the over-reliance on loans and external capital infusion

Candidates silent on primary health care

By Edelina P. De la Paz, M.D.
Executive Director
Health Action Information Network

The health agenda of the presidential candidates presented a general platform for improving the quality of health care and making it affordable to all. All of them mentioned the need to improve the economy and increase national wealth through improved productivity and generation of jobs so as to have healthier Filipinos with better quality of life. All cited the need to develop a sustainable and responsive health program.

However, these are all motherhood statements that do not clearly define how such programs can be achieved.

The need to realign the budget to prioritize social services, including health, was recognized. However, no specific percentage of the budget for health was mentioned. A few years ago, the World Health Organization recommended that developing countries allocate at least five percent of their gross national product (GNP) for health. At present, our health budget is a measly 1.7 percent of GNP, a far cry from what other countries are allocating.

All presidential candidates mentioned the need to make health services affordable. However, most of them favor the continued globalization thrusts of the government, which are being imposed by the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Privatization of hospitals

It is evident from this that they do not understand that the globalization policies and programs being promoted by these institutions are actually pushing for privatization of government hospitals through their user fee, cost recovery, and revenue enhancement schemes. These will further make health services unaffordable to many Filipinos.

Drugs in the country continue to be expensive because we still rely so much on imported raw materials to produce them. There is no real Filipino drug industry. Multinational drug companies continue to dominate the drug market. With Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement of the WTO now being implemented, drug prices will remain high, people will have less access to medicines, and pharmaceutical industries in developing countries will weaken.

The TRIPS agreement calls for a patent protection for pharmaceutical products for 20 years. This eliminates competition from generic production of medicines until the expiration of the patent, thus denying patients cheaper alternatives. This situation is not clearly defined in the agenda of the presidential candidates.

Brain drain

Likewise, the General Agreement on Trade and Services, another WTO agreement, which allows the movement of professionals from developing to developed countries and vice versa, has resulted in the brain drain of our professionals, who could have contributed to improving our country's health situation. None of the presidential candidates mentioned this problem and some of them even saw the migration of our health professionals as a positive projection of our country internationally, forgetting about the loss of human resources needed to respond to our health needs, notwithstanding its social costs.

To eradicate malnutrition, more comprehensive measures must be taken. Workers must be justly compensated and landless tillers must be given land to ensure food security for millions of impoverished Filipinos.

In the health agenda of all presidential candidates, there is no mention of primary health care. Universal and comprehensive primary health care continues to be recognized world wide as the core of health programs. Health for All Now can only be achieved if people's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are assured. While governments have the primary responsibility of promoting a more equitable approach to health and human rights, strong people's organizations and movements are important to ensure control over policy development and implementation.

Sadly, the presidential candidates' health agenda sorely lacks this general framework that address people's health needs in the context of genuine national democracy and development.

Address shortage of decent jobs and lack of quality education

By Carlo Cleofe
Chair
Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan

The re-established SDK is relieved that Talk of the Town has allowed presidential candidates to present their views on various issues and gave the voters the opportunity to evaluate the platforms.

At a press conference on Feb. 18, we asked: "Where is the platform of concrete solutions to the problems of the masses?"

With the INQUIRER requiring answers from presidential aspirants, the SDK hoped that our query would not be a "cry in the wilderness." Despite this, we heard nothing from them but a rehash of the old propaganda line of improving the economy and the peace and order situation for development to "trickle down" to the poor.

None among the contenders are pushing for solutions to the shortage of decent jobs and lack of quality education.

With the way they answered, it seems that the first issue is a no-brainer. All candidates stated that the solution to job shortage is simply to create more jobs.

But what the youth require is not only to be employed but also to have jobs with sufficient wages, security of tenure and safe working conditions.

To tackle unemployment through job creation alone is tantamount to appeasing investors who want to utilize labor productivity while neglecting the well being of the youth.

Contractualization

In dealing with unemployment, the focus must not only be on job generation but on conditions of employment, particularly on wages and contractualization. Especially since heightened competition in the global market has increased the pressure on employers to scour the world for cheaper and more docile labor.

Furthermore, state protection to existing jobs must be stressed. Unbridled competition in the world market has led to factory closures.

Next is the issue of quality education, which is recognized by the 1987 Constitution as a right of the Filipino people.

But due to budgetary constraints, the state could only ensure primary and secondary education. Not only has it reduced allocations for tertiary education, the government has also advised state colleges and universities to look for other sources of funding.

Social services

Hence, education is correlated with increasing the budget for social services. But the budget for social services is being depleted due to automatic debt appropriation.

For this year alone, the administration has earmarked P542.2 billion for debt payments but set aside only P248.3 billion for education. And as long as the education budget is a mere fraction of the funds for debt servicing, quality education will remain a privilege for those who can afford this commodity from private schools and universities.

And not one among the respondents—not even the former education secretary whose slogan is "Libreng Edukasyon"—has taken on the challenge of reducing debt payments to increase the education budget.

After reviewing the presidential platforms, the SDK has decided to cast a "NOTA" (none of the above) vote as far as the presidential race is concerned.

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BOAT RACING
Participants to the boat racing competition in the Second Candon Beach Festival in Ilocos Sur ready their boats for the race. The festival is part of the celebration of Candon City fiesta.

NPA says it will keep 2 soldiers captive sans talks with gov't

LUCENA CITY—Communist guerrillas will hold on to two captive government soldiers indefinitely and continue to treat them as prisoners of war, a communist spokesman said.

Gregorio Rosal, also known as Ka Roger, said Friday the New People's Army was now preparing to keep the two soldiers in captivity following the government's refusal to negotiate their release.

"With the intransigence and seeming disinterest of the GMA administration to negotiate for the freedom of the POW (prisoners of war) despite our sincere call, we might as well issue the order to the custodial force to prepare the men for a long custody of the two Army soldiers now deserted by their own commander-in-chief," Rosal said in a mobile phone interview.

Rosal said since the capture of the two, the Communist Party of the Philippines has been calling upon the Macapagal administration to order the AFP to stop its military operations in the province and surrounding areas, and to instruct the government peace panel to get in touch with its National Democratic Front counterpart to discuss terms for the safe and orderly release of the prisoners.

Rosal said any attempt to rescue the soldiers would be stupid.

He said the two captives would be treated under the terms of the Geneva Convention for war prisoners.

"I hope that the military will not repeat its stupidity," he said.

The guerrillas are keeping 1st Lt. Ronaldo Fedelino and Pfc. Ronel Lemeno. Guerrilla leaders said the two surrendered after a gunfight on March 1 in a village in Tinambak, Camarines Sur.

Lemeno's fianceé said in a radio interview she was worried about the safety of her boyfriend.

She said they were scheduled to get married this month.

Rosal raised the possibility that the National Democratic Front might look for a possible negotiator that would represent the families of the captive soldiers.

"It would now depend on the NDF whom they want to represent the families of the POW. Or the families of the prisoners may approach anybody who they think can help secure the safe release," he said.

But a militant fishermen's group suggested that Sen. Loren Legarda, who is now running for vice president, play the role of negotiator.

"In times like this, peaceniks and independent parties like Senator Legarda could come in and help in the negotiated release of prisoners of war," Fernando Hicap, Pamalakaya national chair, said in a statement sent to the INQUIRER.

Hicap took note of Legarda's track record in facilitating the release of NPA prisoners in the past citing the successful release of Army General Orbillo in Mindanao and Army Maj. Noel Buan in Mindoro Oriental. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Lawmen declare Cebu chemical cargo illegal

By J. Napallacan and J. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Authorities have declared as illegal the shipment of 60 drums of pseudo-ephedrine, a chemical used in the manufacture of shabu.

The decision was reached following a three-hour meeting attended by Director Gen. Anselmo Avenido, Philippine Drugs Enforcement Agency (PDEA) chief; Reynaldo Esmeralda, National Bureau of Investigation director for Central Visayas and Cebu City Rep. Antonio Cuenco, House committee chair on dangerous drugs.

The three agreed that while PDEA has authorized Coastside Ventures Inc. (CVI) to import pseudo-ephedrine, the firm had failed to secure a permit specifically to import 60 drums of such chemicals.

In separate interviews, Esmeralda and Cuenco said the CVI should have secured from PDEA a special permit for every importation of these chemicals.

"With the absence of that special permit, the shipment is considered illegal," Esmeralda said yesterday.

The Bureau of Customs seized about 1,800 kilos of pseudo-ephedrine from Shanghai, China last March 8 on board MV Intra Blum at the Cebu International Port.

It was the biggest haul of regulated drug in Central Visayas as the chemicals would be worth about P3.6 billion when made into shabu.

Customs Collector Billy Bibit earlier said the shipment was consigned to one Mike Cummings of CVI with address at Unit E-19 Kings Warehouse Plaza on Hernan Cortez Street, Mandaue City.

The NBI had obtained a certification from PDEA that the CVI was a "registered license holder as an importer and distributor of controlled precursors and essential elements that include pseudo-ephedrine hydrochloride."

The certification also listed one Joebert Cuesta as president of the company.

But Cuesta, executive assistant of Vice Gov. John Osmeña, said he was not the Cuesta identified as an officer of CVI.

"I have never been an employee, officer, nor shareholder of the said Coastside Ventures Inc., and if my name appears in any of its records, it does not have knowledge nor consent," Cuesta said in his affidavit submitted to the NBI on Tuesday.

Esmeralda said they would verify if Cuesta's name and photo were just being used or if there exists another Joebert Cuesta.

He said Cuesta's photo, which was attached to the letter-request to PDEA, looked like the Cuesta who went to his office to execute an affidavit.

He, however, noted that the signatures of the two Cuestas looked different.

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Judge who sentenced men without lawyers draws fine

BAGUIO CITY—The blunder committed by this judge was unthinkable.

On Oct. 3, 1996, Judge Orlando Oco of the municipal trial court of Polomolok, South Cotabato, arraigned two persons accused of theft and sentenced each of them on the same day to six months and one day in prison—but without the assistance of a lawyer.

The Supreme Court's first division declared such act a "gross ignorance of the law," and fined Oco P20,000.

Oco could have been sacked, or maybe suspended. But the principle of prospectivity of laws—an SC rule that imposes heavier penalties on erring judges—could not be applied in his case. The rule covers offenses committed from Oct. 1, 2001 onwards.

Under SC Administrative Matter No. 01-8-10-SC, gross ignorance of the law or procedure is punishable by dismissal from service and forfeiture of all benefits, suspension from office not exceeding six months, or a fine from P20,000 to P40,000.

But the high court said the administrative matter took effect only on Oct. 1, 2001, hence, it cannot be applied retroactively.

"Accordingly, we sustain the Office of the Court Administrator's recommendation that Oco be required to pay a fine of P20,000, a penalty we have meted in similar administrative cases involving gross ignorance of the law," the SC's 21-page decision said.

Antonio Gamas and Florencio Sobrio, both accused of stealing 25 sacks of corn slabs owned by Dole Philippines, earlier filed an administrative complaint against Oco when they found out that the proceedings held by Oco were highly irregular.

They said that after posting bail on Oct. 3, 1996, a certain SPO4 Willie Adulacion connived with Oco to entice them to plead guilty. *Delmar Cariño, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

DENR removes campaign ads from Puerto trees

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Department of Environment and Natural Resources personnel took campaign posters and streamers off trees here.

According to Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer in charge Florencio Diaz, the DENR will implement the memorandum of Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun even if the materials are those of administration candidates.

To fully clear the trees from unwanted political materials, DENR will seek the assistance of barangay officials. Diaz said he already coordinated with the Commission on Elections.

Product advertisements hung on trees will not be spared.

Diaz said those who are caught posting streamers on trees would be charged with criminal offenses for defacing and destroying trees. *Jofelle Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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Artistic exposé of scheming politicos

By Romulo O. Ponte
Sta. Cruz, Laguna

THE SCENARIO of Philippine politics, which shows how the poor and the innocent young are being manipulated by unscrupulous adults and powerful individuals, is among the themes of an art exhibit, titled "Senaryo," by two young artists in Laguna's capital town of Sta. Cruz.

Rafael Patnubay D. Pagarigan, 26, and Juanito L. Torres, 27, both of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City, called their exhibit "Takbo. Eksena: Di lang paglalantad ng kalagayan ng bansa. Pahimakas din sa hinaharap. (Run. Scene. Not only an exposé of the conditions of the country. Also a leave-taking for the future)."

The exhibit opened on March 7 at the Nineveh Artspace gallery at Jonah's House of Prayer. It was supposed to have closed on March 21 but due to popular demand, its run was extended up to next week. Two busloads of parishioners from Manila, who are on a "Bisita Iglesia" trip, have requested the extension.

Pagarigan's works concentrate on the manipulations and abuses of helpless Filipinos by powerful politicians and the military.

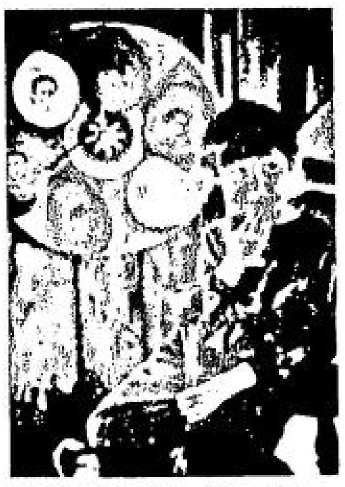
His "Entablado" (Stage) features presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., a newcomer in the political scene, whose popularity is being exploited by traditional politicians garbed as alligators and introducing the unsuspecting actor to the fold of crooks.

"Roleta" (Roulette) tells of powerful politicians making fun of the poor inside a "*tambiolo*" (raffle drum).

The artists said they intended to "record the present realities happening before our very eyes. This could also make people critically aware of what's happening around them."

Torres' creations reveal the crisis destroying today's youth. These include "Mga Batang Prosti" (Child Prostitutes), "Pinirata" (Pirated) and "Kapit sa Patalim" (Desperate), which aimed to make authorities and concerned citizens aware of how adults exploit the young in society.

"If our children are so corrupted, morally degenerated and dejected, then how can they become our future?" Torres asked.



"ROLETA" by Rafael Patnubay D. Pagarigan
PHOTO COURTESY OF NINEVEH ARTSPACE

Impressions

Artists, students, theologians, parishioners and private and government individuals from Cavite, Ilocos, Laguna, Metro Manila and elsewhere have seen the exhibit and shared the impression that the art works were "eloquent portrayal of the present state of our exploited young as well as the political, social realities in the country," said Louie Sevilla, owner-manager of the gallery.

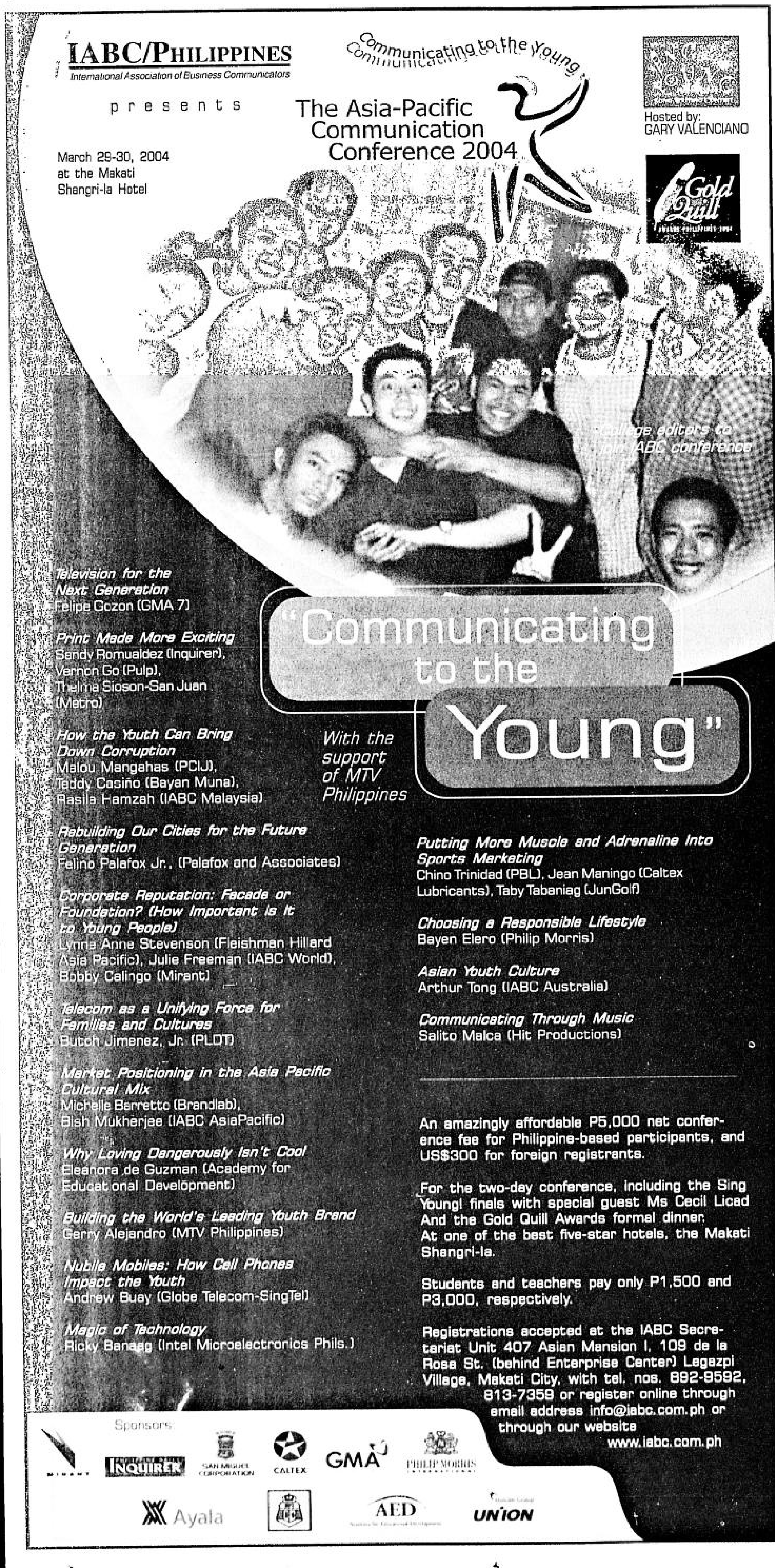
Last week, about 80 architecture students from the North Western University in Laoag City visited the gallery, Sevilla said.

One professional artist, who was pleased with the exhibit, was quoted as saying: "These boys have a bright future ahead of them. I advise them to keep on producing more of their brand of art and collect their art works."

About 12 theological students from Tagaytay City agreed that the paintings were good visual aids for people to reflect on the socio-moral-political situation.

Pagarigan said he and Torres hoped those who came would learn their social and political messages through their masterpieces.

During the Holy Week, Sevilla announced that his gallery would feature artists Arturo Sanchez Jr. and Kim Sison from Angono, Rizal. Their exhibit will be titled "Imahen (Image), Portraits of Lent."



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Angelica, 2, needs a liver transplant

By Joyce Mejillano
Daraga, Albay

THE FEAR of losing their fifth and youngest child to a liver illness haunts the Manzanilla couple like a nightmare.

MANZANILLA

"I always fear that that day will come when I wake up only to find my daughter Angelica is gone," Leticia Manzanilla said in between sobs in their small house in remote Barangay Gapo in Daraga, Albay.

Angelica was diagnosed as having biliary atresia (a liver condition in which the bile ducts are absent, inflamed or unable to convey bile out of the organ) when she was still 6 weeks old.

According to information from the Internet (www.liver.ca), biliary atresia begins in early infancy and causes damage to the liver due to the destruction of ducts, which connect the liver to the small intestine. The patient's liver soon becomes cirrhotic and he eventually dies. The condition normally occurs in one in every 10,000 to 20,000 births, usually in a first-born baby girl.

Operation

When she was 6 weeks old, Angelica had already undergone a six-hour operation to repair her bile ducts through the Kasai method at the V. Luna Memorial Hospital in Quezon City. That was the time her doctors noticed her condition.

Due to financial constraints, the family decided to bring Angelica home in Bicol. "The doctors prescribed her medicines for maintenance. Now, she takes six kinds of medicine and vitamins every day. So, we just now rely on medicines and, of course, our faith in God," Leticia said.

She said they had also approached even traditional healers, but Angelica's condition had not changed.

"She's very weak and malnourished. She eats limited food though it seems like she likes to eat almost anything. She competes with her siblings in reaching for the food on the table," Leticia said.

Early last month, Angelica suffered from high fever and flu, and was rushed to the Bicol Regional Training and Teaching Hospital.

"I thought it was her time already. Every time she feels so different, we are all worried and think that it's already her time," Leticia said, crying.

Angelica's doctor told the Manzanillas that the baby needed a liver transplant that would cost about P3 million.

The Inquirer learned that the country did not have facilities for such a delicate operation, and the couple was told that in case the money was raised, the operation could be done in Korea, Taiwan or in any country abroad which has sophisticated medical equipment.

Helpless

Already financially drained from Angelica's costly medicines and other family needs, the couple said it was almost impossible to have the operation.

"I felt dizzy when the doctor told us how much we need to have her operated," said Leticia, an elementary teacher. Her salary usually goes to her child's medicines and other needs amounting to about P500 a day, plus the unexpected cost of hospitalization every time her condition changes, she said.

"My husband used to drive a tricycle before, but due to Angelica's situation, he'd rather take care of the baby while I'm in school."

Asked if they want the baby to be operated on and undergo a liver transplant, the couple said "we want to try, we want to gamble if that's the only way to keep her alive, but we need help to raise the money the soonest time possible."

They appealed to Good Samaritans for help to save their daughter through prayers or financial assistance, or both.

THOSE who want to help Angelica may contact the PDI Southern Luzon Bureau, at tel. nos. (052) 8208402, (052) 8201989 or (052) 8205051

GMA to pursue gov't takeover of Maynilad

From page A1

gotiable objective and we are willing to fight this out in any forum."

The takeover has yet to be approved by the Quezon City Regional Trial Court and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Acting Justice Secretary Ma. Merceditas Gutierrez said the terms of the takeover could still be altered.

Needs approval

Gutierrez, one of those named in Mauricio's complaint, said changes could still be made in the plan to "reorganize" Maynilad because the court, SEC and the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) had yet to approve the plan.

"Neda will also have to come in when that is approved by the RTC," she said.

The Neda board happens to be chaired by Ms Macapagal.

Noting that 160,000 families in Metro Manila had no access to clean water, Ms Macapagal said: "I will not be harassed into stopping the delivery of clean water." Maynilad supplies water to half of the metropolis.

"I appeal to our political leaders to have a full understanding of this whole thing before riding on it. This is a matter of national interest and not politics," she said. *(Related story on page A2.)*

Sen. Loren Legarda, vice presidential candidate of actor Fernando Poe Jr., earlier denounced the takeover as a deal that "stinks to high heavens."

Bad precedent

In Meycauayan, Bulacan, Legarda yesterday continued her attacks. She said the Lopez family was setting a "very bad precedent" in the business community by pushing through with the government bailout.

"Let's put it this way: You and I set up a business but when it loses money, we ask the government to shoulder our losses and these are eventually passed on to the ordinary taxpayer," said Legarda, former newsreader of the Lopez-owned ABS-CBN TV network.

"Anyway you look at it, it (deal) can't be defended," she said.

Opposition senatorial candidate Francisco Tatad decried the bailout as "crony capitalism with a vengeance."

"It is an outright donation, borne by the Filipino taxpayers who must now absorb the mega-debts incurred by the Lopezes," Tatad said.

Noli as Lopez surrogate

He said it made no sense to suggest that the deal was just part of a larger agreement involving the drafting of Sen. Noli de Castro, a talent of ABS-CBN, as Ms Macapagal's running mate.

"The only thing that makes sense is that she has become a business partner of the Lopezes and that her teaming up with a Lopez surrogate is intended to cement that partnership," Tatad said.

Roco had also batted for a review of the deal, saying it smacked of crony capitalism.

Not only politicians, but also businessmen are questioning the deal.

Unsatisfied with the explanation of the parties to. the deal, Donald G. Dee said he would bring the matter to the board of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) for review.

Dee, PCCI executive vice president for national issues, disclosed his plan after he and a small group of business leaders presented the chamber's "first 100-day" agenda to Alyansa standard-bearer Raul Roco on Tuesday night.

Critical issue

To Roco's suggestion that the business group incorporate the review of the deal in the 100-day agenda, Dee said: "No, we will not wait for that, sir. We can't wait; there's too much confusion (on the issue)."

"We will analyze the whole thing, and if they (PCCI board) want to come up with a position, then we'll come up with a position. It's such a critical issue; we have to consult the board," he later said in an interview. "I owe it to the board [to bring the issue to its attention]."

Dee pressed Benpres Holdings Corp., majority owner of Maynilad, to present a copy of the agreement and the balance sheet of the water utility to the PCCI.

"I have to admit that the only thing I know about this is what I see in the papers. What they should do is publish all agreements, and we all look at all agreements, look at the balance sheet and we will see, and give our opinion if it was properly done or not," he said. "Given what is in the papers, something is not clear."

Premature

Gutierrez said it was "premature" to say that Maynilad was given "unwarranted benefits" because the court had yet to rule on it.

"They crafted this plan for the interest of the government while considering the situation of Maynilad. It's up to the court to really determine and rule on whether this plan is for the good of all the parties involved," she said.

She hinted that the graft charges filed by Mauricio against her, the President, Justice Undersecretary Manuel A.J. Teehankee, and Benpres officials were politically motivated.

"We welcome any investigation but we think that it is not right since we were not involved in the negotiations. We just have to react by filing a correspondent action against them for not reviewing the facts," Gutierrez said.

Against national interest

At a press conference in Dipolog City, where the Alyansa ng Pag-Asa was campaigning yesterday, Mauricio said the Ombudsman had the power to stop actions of government agencies and officials which would go against the national interest.

Quoting Section 15 of the Ombudsman Act of 1989, Mauricio said the agency could direct, upon the filing of a complaint or at its instance, any officer or employee of the government "to perform and expedite any act or duty required by law, or to stop, prevent and correct any abuse or impropriety in the performance of duties."

"President Macapagal has given a big favor to Benpres using taxpayers' money, and we should stop this at all cost," said the lawyer, who hosts dzBB's "Batas ng Bayan."

The President's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the deal was defensible.

"This is justifiable and completely legal and the primary interest the President is protecting here is the public, which needs delivery of clean water. Instead of filing cases, why don't these publicity-seekers propose solutions?" he said. ***With reports from Carlito Pablo and TJ Burgonio***

Maynilad deal not for public disclosure, court says

By Christine Gaylican
Business

THE QUEZON City Regional Trial Court has ruled that details of the deal between the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) and Benpres Holdings Inc. for the reorganization of Maynilad Water Services cannot be made public.

Judge Reynaldo B. Daway of the the court's Branch 90 said Amendment No. 2 to the concession agreement should only be made available to the creditors and concerned parties to the case because they would review and evaluate it.

Maynilad lead counsel Ronald A. Ledesma said yesterday at the court hearing that 73 percent of the water utility's creditors had approved Amendment No. 2.

In a copy of the amendment obtained by the INQUIRER, the MWSS reiterated that it would not manage the "New Maynilad."

It said it would be represented on the board of directors of the New Maynilad by the Development Bank of the Philippines and would not be involved in the decision-making process of the company.

As the MWSS trustee, the DBP will hold 39 percent of the shares worth P3.2 billion. The Lopez Group's Benpres Holdings, which will still hold 2 percent of the water utility, shall be represented by Metrobank and Trust Co. as its trustee.

"The MWSS shall at times preserve its mandate as the regulatory body and shall not participate in decisions relating to the running of the business of the Concessionaire and MWSS shall not directly manage or make management decisions," Section 2.5 of Amendment No 2 said.

The new agreement says that the MWSS has agreed that Benpres will only be paying $50 million, which can be drawn from the $120 million performance bond of the water utility.

"[The] MWSS further agrees that it shall make no further drawings from the $120 million Standby Letter of Credit after the initial drawdown of $50 million," it said.

Because of a case pending before the Supreme Court on the $120-million performance bond, the MWSS has agreed with Maynilad that if the high court rules in the government's favor, they would jointly file a motion for a limited draw down of the bond.

Customers of New Maynilad, meanwhile, will be slapped higher rates in June.

The rates will go up by an average of P26 from the current P19 per cubic meter, according to Arnold Padilla, senior researcher from the Ibon Foundation.

FPJ security now has decoys, undercover men

From page A1

Roberto Calinisan, a retired chief superintendent, who is in charge of the movie idol's close-in security.

Staying alive

Interviewed by mobile phone, Calinisan said: "Name every security precaution, including decoys, and we've started employing them. Our goal is to keep FPJ alive before and after the elections."

At the residence of Mayor Leoncio Duran Jr. who hosted a lunch for him and the KNP national candidates, Poe himself told reporters: "We're just being cautious."

Asked to say categorically if there was indeed a threat on his life, he responded with a smile.

When pressed, he said: "That's part of it [running for president]."

He was noncommittal when asked if he expected similar attempts like the disqualification case to stop his candidacy: "There could be, but there could be none."

"We don't know how this government is moving," he said.

Chopper landings

Another adjustment in Poe's security was visible as he swung through this vote-rich province for the second time since the campaign period officially started on Feb. 10.

His chopper landed on the rooftop of the SM shopping mall in Meycauayan, a site restricted from curious onlookers and secured by uniformed guards.

In previous sorties, choppers bearing Poe and the other KNP candidates landed in town plazas where a throng of people, mostly movie fans and journalists, would wait to mob their idol.

Poe's personal campaign manager, Sen. Vicente Sotto III, said early this week that he was meeting Calinisan and Sen. Gregorio Honasan to discuss the upgrading of their candidate's security.

Honasan, a former Army colonel, is in charge of Poe's perimeter (or outer ring) security.

Undercover men

Calinisan also said his team had deployed more undercover security personnel to keep an eye on Poe.

"You won't know them because they're not wearing standard KNP vests or [carrying] any identifying [items] like radio receivers, but they're ours," he said.

Calinisan also said his security team was coordinating with law enforcement units stationed in areas where Poe was scheduled to campaign: "We have contacts in the police and military, and they're helping us."

According to Calinisan, certain quarters may be getting desperate as a result of the Supreme Court decision to throw out the disqualification case against Poe.

Fighting back

And like in his movie roles, when the underdog is transformed into a fighting machine, the normally reticent Poe is dishing out attacks against his rivals in the presidential race.

He assailed President Macapagal-Arroyo, with whom he is running neck and neck, for claiming that fears of a Poe presidency had been driving down the value of the peso.

Poe said the way Ms Macapagal and her men were talking showed that "they're already assuming that I've won the elections."

"This makes me more confident," he said.

Poe took offense at Malacañang statements that he and his party should concentrate on presenting a platform of government instead of hitting the administration, particularly on such issues as the P8-billion government bailout of the Maynilad Water Services.

"Why, am I hitting her [the President]?" he demanded to know. Reminded that he had once described the administration as "*bulok* (rotten)," he retorted: "*Eh, bulok naman talaga* (Well, it's really rotten)."

Poe mockingly referred to Ms Macapagal as an economist who brought the country to financial ruin. "Well, who really lacks the capability? She's supposed to be an economist," he said.

'Who, Roco?'

Poe did not spare Raul Roco, standard-bearer of the Alyansa ng Pag-Asa, who had been harping on the movie idol's lack of experience and education, as well as refusal to join the presidential debates.

Told that Roco hit him again and again in a televised debate with evangelist Eddie Villanueva on Monday, Poe merely said: "Who, Roco?"

He employed the same dismissive tone when asked for an update on the unification talks between his camp and that of Sen. Panfilo Lacson. He seized on the word "unification" from the question and said, "With?"—a suggestion that Lacson, like Roco, had become insignificant in the political equation.

"That also will have an ending," Poe added, likening whatever would be the outcome of the talks with Lacson to the ending of a movie.

'Let's see'

Poe hinted that he was prepared to go toe to toe with the President in Cebu province, which pollsters have pegged as Macapagal country and which the two of them are scheduled to visit this weekend.

"Let's see if Cebu is really their bailiwick," he said.

Poe also said he was thankful that the Supreme Court had dismissed with finality the disqualification case against him.

"That's an exclamation point perhaps [to the case]," he said.

Poe's running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, was quick to come to his defense, saying that Malacañang was stepping out of bounds by blaming his candidacy for the weakening of the peso.

"Why, FPJ is not even elected president yet," Legarda said.

Lacson leaves Bulgari scent on campaign trail

From page A1

stink?" he said in response to questions on how he keeps himself looking fresh while campaigning under the summer sun.

His choice scent? "Bulgari," he said almost sheepishly.

A graduate of the Philippine Military Academy and an ex-military officer and chief of the Philippine National Police, Lacson also has a comb and a handkerchief always at hand.

The habit serves him in good stead if one is to go by the motto of the Philippine military: "Do good, look good and feel good."

Makati Rep. Agapito Aquino gushes about the public response to Lacson's sorties.

"The warmth is there. You see the sincerity when people rush to shake his hand, kiss him and hug him," Aquino said, adding:

"I think Mrs. Lacson is already having suspicions about those who rush to kiss him."

Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Carlos Padilla, Lacson's lone senatorial candidate, has made campaign spiels out of the senator's effect on women voters.

Endorsement

"I have some gripes about the people here," Padilla says at town plaza gatherings and whistle stops. "When Ping Lacson shows up, the women rush to embrace him, kiss him. When Carlos Padilla shows up, almost nobody notices."

In San Juan, Batangas, a sister of former Executive Secretary Renato de Villa told Lacson that she and certain members of her clan were rooting for him.

Libertad de Villa-Salud said some of her relatives made their choice because of the promise of change under a Lacson administration.

Renato de Villa himself heads the party Reporma, which coalesced with other parties to form Raul Roco's Alyansa ng Pag-Asa.

"Senator, you are the one we have chosen to support in San Juan," Salud said during a gathering of students and teachers at the Batangas Eastern Academy, which is owned and operated by the De Villas.

Disciplined person

"I told barangay leaders that if they are not supporting President Macapagal-Arroyo, they'd be better off supporting Ping Lacson," she told San Juan Mayor Rodolfo Manalo, a member of the ruling Lakas-CMD, during Lacson's visit to the municipal hall.

"He is a disciplined person," she added.

Salud's husband Joax accompanied Lacson as the candidate swung through San Juan.

The De Villas are recognized as among the town's leaders. School fences and other community structures bear the family name as donor.

Scramble for 17,000 local posts starts today

From page A1

the "most active threat" to the security of the May 10 elections.

Since last Dec. 15, communist rebels have figured in 159 cases of violence. This has resulted in the deaths of 23 soldiers, 15 policemen, 24 civilians, and 11 paramilitary personnel.

Goltiao said most of the incidents were initiated by the NPA to project an image of strength as it continued to collect permit-to-campaign fees from candidates in the countryside.

"We have observed that NPA attacks have intensified right after the start of the election period," he told the INQUIRER.

"This leaves us with no other choice but to intensify our counterinsurgency operations as well."

The incidents involving the NPA included 67 encounters with troops, 23 killings, 17 harassments, 11 ambuscades, nine arson cases, two cases of extortion and a case of abduction.

In at least six incidents, the rebels disarmed authorities and security guards.

Gun ban

The Comelec gun ban has at least yielded some results. Since December, police have seized 959 firearms and 240 explosives and other forms of deadly weapons.

A total of 1,198 people have been arrested for violating the ban.

Another major security concern is the 125 so-called private armies maintained by politicians.

Police have other concerns besides ensuring a peaceful campaign.

As the campaign period for local candidates starts today, members of the Western Police District will begin tearing down illegally placed posters and campaign materials that are expected to sprout in Manila.

The move is part of the district's "Baklas Operation."

Comelec officers yesterday discussed with WPD director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong and the city's 11 station commanders measures to be enforced during the campaign period.

"The police were briefed on the campaign guidelines so that they would know what to enforce and observe," WPD spokesperson Chief Insp. Gerry Agunod said yesterday.

Prohibitions

Among the rules to be enforced is the ban on putting campaign materials in places outside the common posting areas. The prohibited areas include schools, shrines, main thoroughfares, walls of public structures that are in active use, trees and electric posts.

While the police cannot prevent private home or building owners from allowing campaign posters to be placed on their properties, policemen could approach the owners and ask them to remove the posters that are too big and violate the Comelec rules, Agunod said.

Policemen are banned from serving as security escorts of politicians, unless they have authority from the Comelec, to prevent partisanship among lawmen, he added. They are also banned from endorsing any candidate.

High visibility

Police visibility will be maintained to ensure that campaign sorties are peaceful.

"We want to request the public not to be apprehensive when they see (the roving SWAT teams)," Agunod said. "They are there to maintain peace and order."

The PNP is coordinating with the Armed Forces "so that we could anticipate the kind of security that we need to implement. Now we are ready," National Capital Region Police Office chief, Director Ricardo de Leon, said.

De Leon clarified that police security for candidates would only be limited to securing them while they were conducting political rallies or campaigning around the city.

De Leon has also ordered stricter checkpoints to get rid of loose firearms.

No heckling, please

The Comelec and the police reminded candidates and their supporters to refrain from acts which could be construed as hostile by their opponents—such as heckling during rallies and tearing down the campaign materials of rivals.

"Avoid heckling in rallies, don't tear the posters of your opponents, and police your own ranks," Chief Supt. Oscar Valenzuela, head of the Eastern Police District, urged candidates.

"Let the authorities tear down posters," he said.

Lawyer Jovito Balanquit, Marikina City's election officer, said he had sent a memo reminding candidates about Comelec rules, particularly on the display of posters and the conduct of rallies.

Balanquit and other election officers in Metro Manila were to patrol the streets during the night to ensure that the rule on placing posters were observed.

"Many of us won't be sleeping tonight," Balanquit said. "We will arrest those who will violate election laws."

Masses

Candidates for mayor, vice mayor and councilors around Metro Manila plan to launch their campaign by attending Masses in the morning and then holding motorcades or rallies.

Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza and his entire Liberal Party slate will begin the day with a Mass at the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo at 7 a.m.

A "mini" proclamation rally will later be held at Plaza Miranda as a kick-off for a motorcade.

Atienza's rival, former Mayor Mel Lopez of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, will hear Mass at the Tondo Church, after which he will make the rounds of the city.

In Quezon City, incumbent Mayor Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte and his opponent, former Mayor Ismael Mathay Jr., will launch their campaigns with planned huge rallies.

GMA in Belmonte rally

Expected to attend Belmonte's rally are President Macapagal-Arroyo and running mate Sen. Noli de Castro.

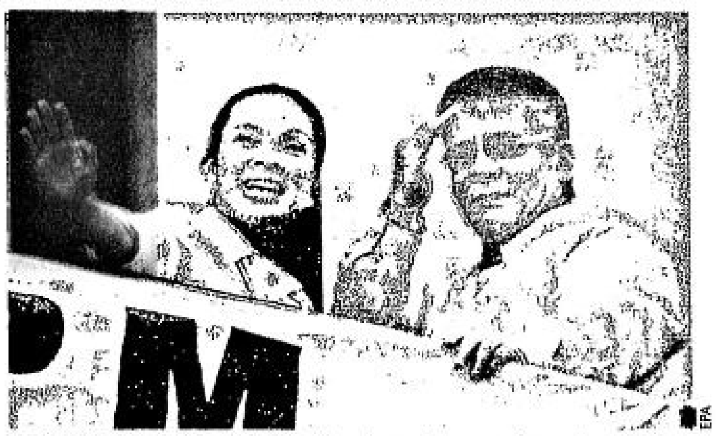
Mathay will open his campaign with a rally in front of the Commission on Audit on Commonwealth Avenue at 7 p.m.

Action star Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Loren Legarda, along with their full KNP senatorial slate are expected to be there. ***With reports from Tina Santos, Luige del Puerto, Tarra Quismundo and Leila Salaverria***

JAMBY MADRIGAL
FPJ

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA: Mobbed as usual, FPJ appears to be trying to keep his balance as a young boy is thrust at him.

PHOTOS BY EDWIN BACASMAS



EPA

A ROYAL salute from "Da King" and running mate Loren Legarda, as they filed their certificates of candidacy at the Comelec last January.

BISLIG CITY, SURIGAO DEL SUR: Possessed throng reaches out to touch the object of their affection wherever whichever.

HIGHWAY from San Pablo City, Laguna, to Lucena, Quezon province: Traffic-stopping candidate greets busloads of commuters.

Pandemonium, gimmicks, that's entertainment

From page A1

Loose talk has it that FPJ is "under the weather," losing his voice yet again. It is the last day of February. He has been on the campaign trail for five days straight and just got off a motorcade. But even this may be less stressful than the fact that, two days from now, the Supreme Court is expected to rule on the question of his qualification as a presidential candidate by virtue of nationality. **(He's a true-born Filipino, the Supreme Court ruled on March 4.)**

Earlier, an insider said: "A 'grand rally' usually means like the one in the Cuneta Astrodome, with lots of entertainers, so that even the candidates' entrances are written into the program—they don't sit on stage all throughout, like they otherwise would."

Less than grand

It's turning out to be less grand than that. Police estimate the crowd at just a little over 3,000, filling up the street down two blocks from the stage. Legazpi's voting population is 82,413. (Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, overall in charge of Poe's security, would admit days later that this was one of their leanest.) Even an FPJ show has slow days.

Thus the speakers are lined up behind the podium now, except for "Da King" and his running mate, Loren Legarda. The two almost always appear within minutes of each other, just before their turn at the microphone. They hardly ever use the waiting station, a fully air-conditioned trailer bus parked a few meters away during every rally.

From the row of seats behind that of the candidates, the audience seems twice as big because the people in front are twice as engaged, twice as receptive, twice as tuned in to the proceedings as the rest of the assembly. They pick up the cues faster—when to raise hand-held posters, when to applaud, when to chant a candidate's name. Just like pros.

For the KNP, a rally crowd is "big" only when there are as many people back of the stage as up front. Tonight, the spectators are all facing the expansive platform, huddled under festive bunting, loud streamers and giant picture ads, the largest of which are Juan Ponce Enrile's and Francisco "Kit" Tatad's, mounted side by side on the building right of the stage. Jamby Madrigal's, right across, sports the likeness of actress-endorser Judy Ann "Juday" Santos that is as big as the candidate's.

Ernesto Maceda is leading the group singing of his recent "composition" to the tune of "Bulaklak," by the Viva Hot Babes: "*Kay bangu-bango ni F-P-J ... kay bahu-baho ni G-M-A* (FPJ is so fragrant, GMA stinks)."

At the foot of the makeshift ladder, Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. and Salvador Escudero await the director's signal to climb up as soon as Maceda's routine winds down. No one should steal the thunder from another, if they can help it.

Gotta have a gimmick

Maceda's song is nothing new to media men covering the KNP campaign. Neither is Jinggoy Estrada's "Erap-speak" or Enrile's "Ispageti" dance. "*Paulit-ulit lang naman ang mga* gimmick, *minsan may* variations, *depende* sa crowd (they just repeat the same gimmicks, with occasional variations, depending on the crowd)," one reporter says, echoing his other colleagues' observation. He knows one candidate's spiel by heart, he adds, but does not say which one.

To underscore his vow of freeing Philippine democracy from its shackles, Pimentel snaps a yellow plastic chain in two. Boots Anson-Roa has assistants tossing cardboard fans like frisbees to the audience.

Estrada tells a story that culminates in a supposed quote from his father, former President Joseph "Erap" Estrada: "*Ba't mo ba 'ko ginagaya—nagpatubo ako ng bigote, nagpatubo ka rin; nag-meyor, ako, nag-meyor ka rin; nagpataba ako, nagpataba ka rin; hanggang nakulong ako, nagpakulong ka rin* (Why are you doing everything I do—I grew a moustache, I became mayor, I gained weight—you did all that, and when I got jailed, you followed me there, too)!" Then he asks his listeners if he got Erap right. They love it.

Juday and Jamby

Madrigal ends her bit with a shower of baubles. Comedian Tiya Pusit, one of three emcees, implores the shrieking recipients: "*Wag po n'yong isanla 'yan, ha?* (Don't run to the pawnshop with those, okay?)" Tonight, Madrigal calls special attention to her billboard with the two faces: "*Si Jamby po ang iboto 'nyo; h'wag si Juday* (Vote for Jamby, not Juday)." And then she calls her out—Juday, in the flesh.

Bedlam.

The actress shakes hands that suddenly shoot up at her feet and all the way to the other side of the platform. It takes two members of the stage security staff to keep her from being delivered to the frenzied mob. One of the candidates, sounding genuinely concerned, says to no one in particular, "She really should have registered 'Juday' with the Comelec (Commission on Elections) as one of her aliases."

Erap on their mind

At this point, three types of speeches have been delivered—one that tackles issues, one that hard-sells the candidate, and one that mourns the "unlawful" ouster of former President Estrada.

"They didn't use to be this vocal about Erap," a relative of one party member whispers to her seatmate.

One of the emcees announces Legarda's arrival, and eager to deliver more happy news, adds: "*Dumating na rin po ang* King of Comedy (the King of Comedy has arrived, referring to Dolphy, FPJ's special guest for the Bicol leg of the campaign), *kasama ang inyong kababayan* (with your provincemate), Eddie Garcia!"

Commotion

Jinggoy pauses from minding a group of young girls demanding his attention, drops the matinee idol grin, and grimly signals to a stagehand, who leaps to his side. "*Si FPJ dapat ang nagsasabi no'n* (It's FPJ who should say that)." The look, the stern reprimand—it is much better than his standard Erap impersonation.

Loren works the crowd to the beat of her jingle, "*Loren, Loren, sinta.*" She blows kisses, holds up both index fingers to the sky (the KNP hand signal), bends forward to shake hands. When the music fades away, she delivers a speech that is short and sweet, and of the second type. And then, in a smooth segue to FPJ's appearance, she sings "Kahit Konting Pagtingin (Just a Little Caring)," the Tagalog version of a Spanish folk song that is the theme of one of his biggest movie hits, opposite Sharon Cuneta. FPJ is a better singer than Loren.

Field of fingers

At last, it's time for "Da King's" address. "Bagong Umaga" by Bayang Barrios, the first line of which was heard earlier with each mention of "Fernando Poe Jr.," is played in full as the actor—sunbrowned, miraculously revived, and not wearing dark glasses—strides across the stage like the ... well, like a head of state. The possessed throng yields a field of index fingers pointed upward.

FPJ's is the fourth and final type of speech in this grand rally. "*Napakarumi ng pulitika, at maraming nagtataka kung bakit pinasok ko ito* (Politics is so dirty that many people wonder why I got into it)," he says softly, like the hero at the start of his every movie. A reporter lip-syncs his next line, down to the breath: "*Pero kahit butas ng karayom, papasukin ko para sa inyo* (but I would go through the eye of the needle for all of you)!"

Pandemonium

Now he roars: "*Malapit nang mapuno ang salop* (loosely translated: I'm close to boiling point)!" The field of fingers grows twice in size, and from it soars a jubilant voice proclaiming, "*Malapit na silang hindi sikatan ng araw* (They will soon not see the light of day)!"

And then all too suddenly it seems, FPJ is calling his buddy, actor Eddie Gutierrez, onstage. "*Tatay ni Ruffa* (Ruffa's dad)," Jinggoy's fans tell one another.

And then he calls in Eddie Garcia, to whom the crowd pays homage with the spirited chanting of a Bicolano term of endearment. "*O-ra-gon! O-ra-gon! O-ra-gon!*" The "macho man" responds lengthily in Bikol, eliciting more cheers.

Dolphy's priceless support

FPJ's voice cracks a little while introducing Dolphy. Could be the chronic sore throat, or raw emotion. Earlier in the day, the motorcade to Tabaco City, Albay had to be pushed back by an hour because Poe personally picked up his old friend and ally from the airport. "That's the least he can do," a marshal said. "Dolphy is not charging him anything for this."

From one "king" to another, the support is priceless, indeed. Faces light up when Dolphy walks to center stage. The crowd laughs as one with every joke, and cheers uncontrollably when he addresses FPJ: "*Hayaan mo, Ronnie, pag sinabi nila na Amerikano ka, si George Bush ang lalabanan natin.*"

It is a week old text joke, but they lap it up.

"Bagong Umaga" (new day) blares from the loud speakers again as the candidates take their final bow. The people start to disperse, ever so slowly.

GINGOOG CITY: A happy day when Veep Teofisto Guingona makes it official that he's joined the Poe campaign as adviser on governance and policy.

HOLDING his own with business titans like Washington Sycip (seated), Donald Dee (left) and Miguel Varela.

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA: A field of fingers grab at him before he can even say, "Bagong Umaga."

2 suspected Chinese drug lords nabbed

By Christian Esguerra

TWO ALLEGED leaders of a big-time Chinese drug ring were arrested in separate operations in Manila and Caloocan City the other day.

First to fall was Ang Tieng Shien, alias Francis Chan, who was arrested by a composite team from the Bureau of Immigration and the police Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force.

He was collared at the Century Park Hotel at about 5 p.m. Tuesday.

A subsequent operation led to the arrest of Chan's associate, Chua A-Lee, alias Tony Chua, at Lot 1, Block 25 Maple St., Rainbow Village V, in Barangay Deparo, Caloocan, at about 10:30 p.m.

Tipped off

The suspects were arrested on the strength of a mission order issued by Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez and information given by their former men in the alleged drug trade.

Deputy Director General Edgar Aglipay, AID-SOTF commander, yesterday paraded Chan and Chua in a press conference, belying criticism that the government's all-out war against drug trafficking had yet to net a "big fish."

Aglipay's team earlier arrested William Gan, said to be the country's top drug trafficker, whose syndicate produced 25 percent of the total supply of shabu in the local market.

In a previous interview, Aglipay said the perception that the government's anti-drug campaign arrested only small fry was unfair.

He explained that recent raids on illegal drug laboratories were not accompanied by the arrest of pushers because the raids were follow-up operations arising from the arrest of the drug traffickers.

In the case of Chan and Chua, they were arrested after the Aglipay task force dismantled their laboratories in Las Piñas City last Jan. 11.

Other drug lords

The facilities on New Delhi Street and Lt. Aguilar Avenue in BF International Village had more than 21 kilos of shabu, drug-manufacturing equipment, and a huge quantity of chemicals for producing illegal drugs.

Chan and Chua were nabbed by the team led by Senior Supt. Federico Laciste, Supt. Winnie Quidato and Supt. Neri Ilagan.

The government is looking for other alleged drug traffickers identified as Wang Ya Shi, alias Aaron Wang, and Henry Tan with a combined price tag of P2 million for their arrest.

Deng Xiao Li, alias Shio Teng; Ong Kim Tie, alias Alex Ong; Qui Yun Hai, alias Carlito Go; Jackson "Dina" Uy, Benito Sze/Sy, Ling Tsung Huan, Randy Chua, alias Rodel Uy; and Ong Shin Pin, alias Aping Ong, each has a P500,000 bounty on his head.

METROBRIEFS

Fake credentials

THE MANILA Regional Trial Court yesterday sentenced Villamor Perez, a former official of the Department of Finance, to two to six years in prison for falsifying his educational records. Perez, last employed as an acting chief at the Economic Intelligence and Investigation Bureau, was found to have submitted a fake college diploma and transcript of records from the University of the East (UE), where he claimed to have finished with a degree in Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA). Perez was convicted in absentia after jumping bail. ***Tarra Quismundo***

Mayor in murder

THE MAYOR and former mayor of Buguey town in Cagayan have been charged with murder for the ambush-slay of lawyer and political rival Franklin Tamargo and his 8-year-old daughter in Manila in August last year. Charged before the Manila Prosecutor's Office last week were incumbent Buguey Mayor Lloyd Antiporda and his father Licerio Jr., also a former mayor, alleged gunman Romulo Awingan, cohort Richard Mecate and a John Doe. They were charged based on the affidavit of Manuel Columna, who was arrested last month for being one of the four men involved in the ambush. Tamargo was ambushed in Binondo, Manila, on Aug. 15 last year while he was inside his car. Also killed in the attack was his daughter, Franceil Gail. ***Leila B. Salaverria***

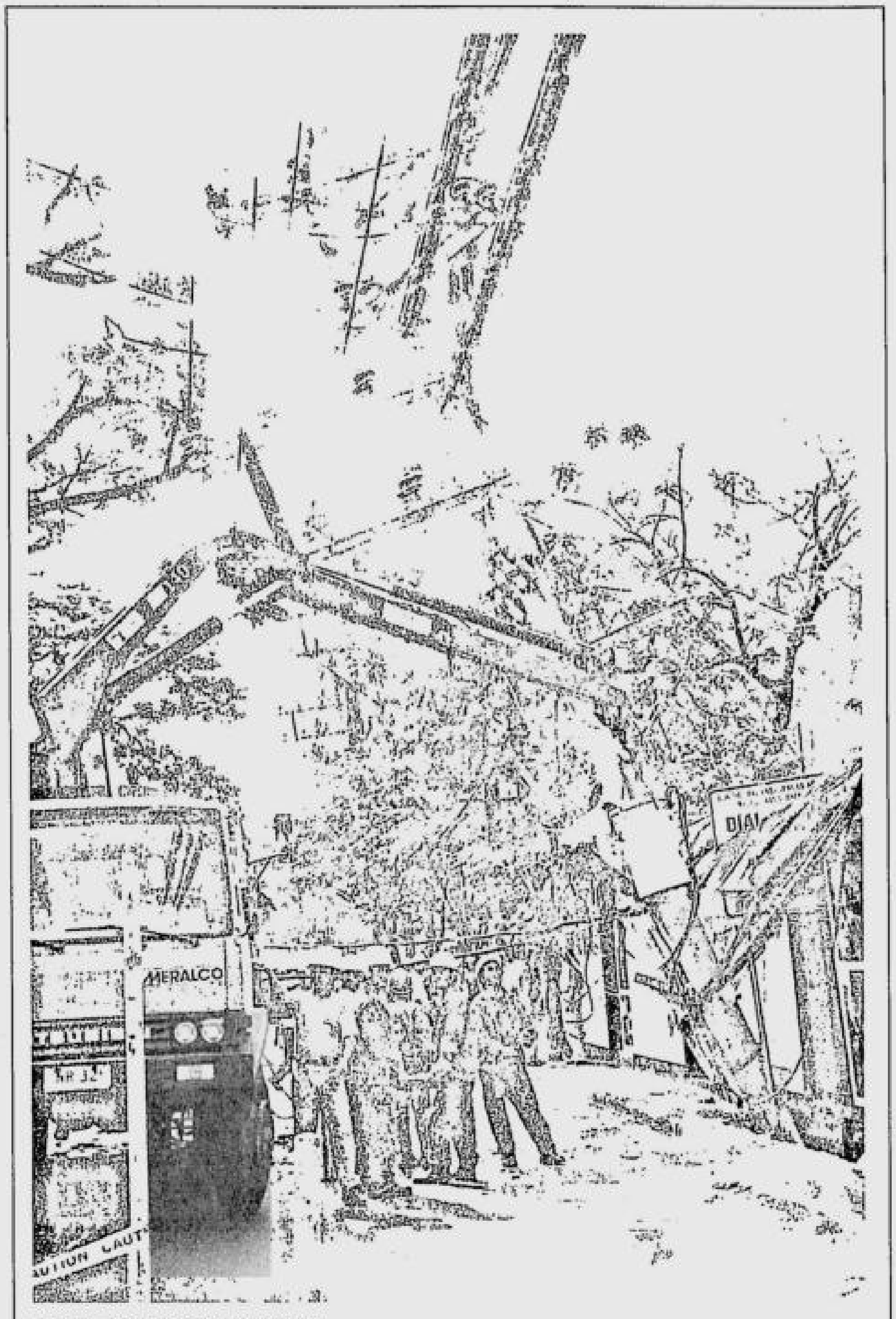
Cherry Hills update

THE SUPREME Court has cleared a senior official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of negligence in the tragedy that struck Cherry Hills subdivision in Antipolo City in 1999. In an 11-page decision, the high court's second division ruled that Ignacia Balicas, DENR senior environmental management specialist, did not have the responsibility of monitoring the housing project of Cherry Hills. The court also ordered Balicas' reinstatement and payment of her backwages. ***Delmar Carino, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

Shot in the face

POLICE Officer 3 Rolando Ramo, 48, only wanted to stop his neighbors from quarreling but he ended up killing Marilou Obemio, 33, who was hit by a bullet in the face when Ramo tried to fire a warning shot. The police said Obemio and an unidentified neighbor were having a shouting match along Matimyas Street, Sampaloc, Manila, a little past midnight yesterday, when Ramo intervened. He later surrendered to authorities. ***Leila Salaverria***

Concrete slab falls off Pasig condo, hits woman



DANGER FROM ABOVE
An electric post leans precariously over Arnaiz Street (formerly Pasay Road) in Makati City after it was dragged by another lamp post that earlier fell on a passing taxi cab, injuring the driver and his three passengers. The Makati Development Corporation said leaking sewage water caused the soil to soften and weaken the foundation of the lamp posts.
ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

Docs amputate 65-year-old victim's left foot

By Luige del Puerto

DEATH fell inches away from a 65-year-old woman who was hit by a concrete slab that fell off from a 22-story condominium in Pasig City early Tuesday night.

However, the right foot of Olivia Lumban, still had to be amputated from the ankle after it was mangled by the 2-feet-long and 1-foot-wide debris.

Her left foot was also placed in a plaster cast after suffering some broken bones.

Freak accident

Lumban was last reported recuperating at the Mercado General Hospital in her hometown of Tanauan, Batangas.

According to the police, Lumban had just come from a sales convention in Quezon City and was inside a passenger jeepney along the Meralco Avenue when the incident happened at about 6 p.m.

The jeepney had just passed Onyx Street on its way toward Shaw Boulevard when it was caught in traffic at the approach of the Meralco Avenue-Julia Vargas flyover, which is undergoing construction.

As the vehicle inched its way in front of the Horizon Condominium, a concrete slab tore through the aluminum roof of the jeepney and landed on Lumban's feet.

Inches from death

The police said that had the debris fallen a few inches off, it could have landed on the head of Lumban or any of the other 12 passengers inside the jeepney.

Lumban was rushed to the Medical City before she was transferred to Tanauan.

Investigator PO3 Geminar Tingne said the debris was part of a concrete barrier at the terrace of the 22nd floor.

An employee of Horizon Condominium said they were still investigating how the chunk of concrete got detached from the building.

At the same time, the condominium employee said the owners of the building were paying for all the medical expenses of Lumban.

Jeepney leaders decry gov't bias for buses

By Clarissa Batino and Edson Tandoc Jr.

THE GOVERNMENT should give passenger jeepneys the same fuel discount it is planning to give to buses, two transport leaders said.

"*Yung ibinigay na kaluwagan sa bus dapat bahagi rin ang mga jeepney* (Jeepneys should be part of the concessions given the buses)," PCDO-ACTO president Efren De Luna told the INQUIRER.

At the same time, Mar Garvida, president of the Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston), said the jeepney drivers felt marginalized by the concessions given by the government to bus operators.

"The government is obviously biased toward buses," Garvida said.

The Piston president also hit the public hearings being conducted by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) as a farce or mere "moro-moro."

"The DOTC (Department of Transporation and Communications) already told us not to expect a fare increase, so nothing will happen in [the] hearings," Garvida stressed.

Seven major bus groups were set to go on strike last March 22 but it was averted after LTFRB and DOTC officials promised to sell diesel to buses at P2 discount or around P16 per liter.

On the other hand, jeepneys were only given a P1 discount or around P17 per liter.

Worse, according to De Luna, only a limited number of filling stations offer the P1 discount to jeepney drivers.

Abput 90,000 jeepneys operate in Metro Manila and 300,000 nationwide. There are about 16,000 buses operating in the country.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines led by Zeny Maranan said they had no complaints about the higher discounts given to buses. Maranan said they would still push for a fare hike before the LTFRB.

Sen. Osmeña's son should be investigated

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

IF IT'S true Cebu Vice Gov. John Gregory Osmeña tried to intercede for the release of a shipment of chemicals used in making methamphetamine hydrochloride (shabu), then he should be investigated.

And if the son of Sen. John Osmeña was himself the importer of the regulated drugs, he should be charged with drug trafficking.

As simple as that. Nobody is above the law.

* * *

The reason this country cannot solve its drug problem is that many people in high places protect drug traffickers.

No matter how many drug pushers are arrested on the streets, if the drug traffickers who import or manufacture the dangerous drugs are not caught, the drug menace will continue to hound us.

Government officials who protect drug lords or who themselves are involved in drug trafficking should be prosecuted to the fullest extent. The only problem is uncovering these officials.

* * *

What's the extent of the country's drug problem?

Even the remotest barrio has its share of drug addicts. Even Marawi City, the seat of conservative Islam in the Philippines, has many drug addicts. Islam, a very strict religion, forbids its faithful to gamble and drink, much more to take prohibited drugs.

Ironically, the Muslim communities in Quiapo, Quezon City and Taguig are in the police list of areas where drugs are openly peddled.

If Juan Kalabasa, the "barriotic" guy, and Abdul Karim, brought up in supposedly strict Muslim upbringing, could become drug addicts, much more the young people in urban areas, where the free-wheeling environment is conducive to drug abuse.

In Metro Manila, many petty and big crimes were committed by people "high" on drugs.

The rising incidence of thrill killing, rape, holdup in jeepneys and buses, and petty theft in the metropolis are blamed by the police on the drug problem.

* * *

In the profile article about presidential candidate Panfilo "Ping" Lacson in the INQUIRER yesterday, Robina Gokongwei Pe said Lacson refused a P500,000 "smiling money" from her father, tycoon John Gokongwei. The money was a token of appreciation for her and her cousin's rescue in 1982 from kidnappers by Lacson and his men.

In those days, half a million pesos was already a big fortune. Lacson looked 10 feet tall from the eyes of erstwhile kidnap victims and their families because of his refusal to accept the money.

But, hear this, dear readers: Ping Lacson asked and was granted a concession by the Gokongweis to raise chickens for Gokongwei-owned Robina Farm months later. Lacson had a farm in Bulacan that he used in "contract growing" of chickens for Robina Farm.

When Lacson's men at the Metrocom Intelligence and Security Group (MISG) learned about this, they got disappointed with their chief.

"We thought he turned down the money out of idealism, but why did he reap the fruits of Robina's rescue without us? We also took part in the rescue and yet he's getting all the praises and benefits," an MISG agent told me in 1982.

At that time, I was covering the MISG as a police reporter for the Manila Bulletin. I knew about Robina and her cousin's rescue.

At that time, I dismissed the complaint of the MISG agent as one coming from a disgruntled subordinate. But looking back, I now believe the MISG agent had basis for the complaint.

Lacson bandied around his honesty like a badge because he was looking ahead—far, far beyond. In the case of the Robina rescue, he was looking forward to the benefits of a personal relationship with the Gokongweis and also an accolade from the public for refusing the reward money.

* * *

Helen Mogan, a friend of old is running for mayor of Tubao, La Union. She called me to ask for help.

Mogan wanted me to ask the Commission on Elections main office in Manila if the poll body really charges P20,000 from candidates who ask permission to have bodyguards.

She said that in order to have a bodyguard, a candidate has to apply with the Comelec. Just like in carrying a gun during the election season.

She needed a bodyguard, Helen said, because she had been receiving threats on her life.

Mogan said the application form says that only P500 is needed as processing fee for a candidate to be given a permit to have an armed bodyguard.

The Comelec man in Tubao must be making a fortune extorting from political candidates in his town.

No plate vehicles given until April 15

By Margaux Ortiz

MOTORISTS now have until April 15 to travel without license plates as long as they could provide the necessary papers to prove that their vehicles have been registered, according to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force and the Land Transportation Office issued the directive after car dealers and manufacturers appealed to extend the March 25 deadline.

Vergel de Dios added that the dealers and manufacturers had requested for the extension because they could not get enough license plates for new vehicles.

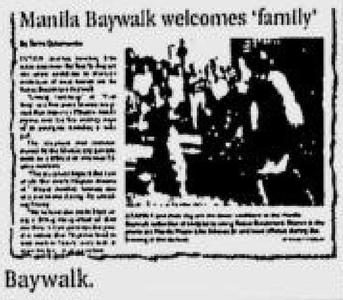
The traffic chief, however, stressed that vehicles with no plate numbers would be immediately impounded after the new deadline has lapsed.

"We, however, fear that these car dealers might use the same excuse to try to postpone the April 15 deadline," Vergel de Dios said.

MMDA traffic enforcers started flagging down vehicles with no license plates since the "no plate, no travel" policy was implemented on March 10.

Motorists who failed to produce the official receipt or certificate of registration, delivery receipt or sales invoice were impounded and fined P5,000.

Artists' group says Verano no longer their member



Manila Baywalk welcomes 'family'

A GROUP of Filipino visual artists called Saturday Group has clarified that Francisco Verano is no longer its member.

Verano was reported to be a member of the group in a news item which appeared in the March 14 issue of the INQUIRER.

That news item (see right) was about the unveiling of sculptures on Roxas Boulevard Baywalk.

METRO
E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

FOUR DIGIT
6 6 7 3
(In exact order)
SUERTRES
7 2 2

MEGALOTTO 6/45
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Campaign against 'kinse' ad gains more sting

By Luige del Puerto and Blanche S. Rivera

BERNARDO

ANSON-ROA

THE DRIVE against the controversial Napoleon Brandy "Kinse Años" ad has gained new supporters.

Yesterday, two women senatorial candidates joined the campaign to have the controversial ad removed from billboards and radio commercials.

Amina Rasul-Bernardo, a member of the senatorial slate of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, said the ad is an affront to both Christian and Muslim societies.

"Ads like this won't work in Muslim areas," said Bernardo, adding the ad "prostitutes" the image of children, whose rights and protection are guaranteed in Muslim tribes.

She said what it connotes is clear to her, as a Muslim and as a woman.

"I went to college in Manila, so I understand the nuances of the culture of the majority. I immediately understood what they (advertisers) wanted to get across," she said, which is the "proclivity" of men to prefer younger women, minors included.

Not always moral

Her fellow senatorial candidate, actor and broadcaster Boots Anson-Roa, said the makers of the ad should pull them out at once.

She also called for stricter self-regulation among advertising agencies and for greater accountability among government agencies involved.

"The makers of this ad are my friends, but in this case, we should rise above friendship," Anson-Roa, who also teaches advertising, told reporters during a forum at the Sitio Fernandina in San Juan. "To them, my message is, '*ma-konsensiya kayo!*'"

Anson-Roa added that the makers of the ad should not hide behind the legality of it. "What is legal is not always moral, but we should be moral," she said.

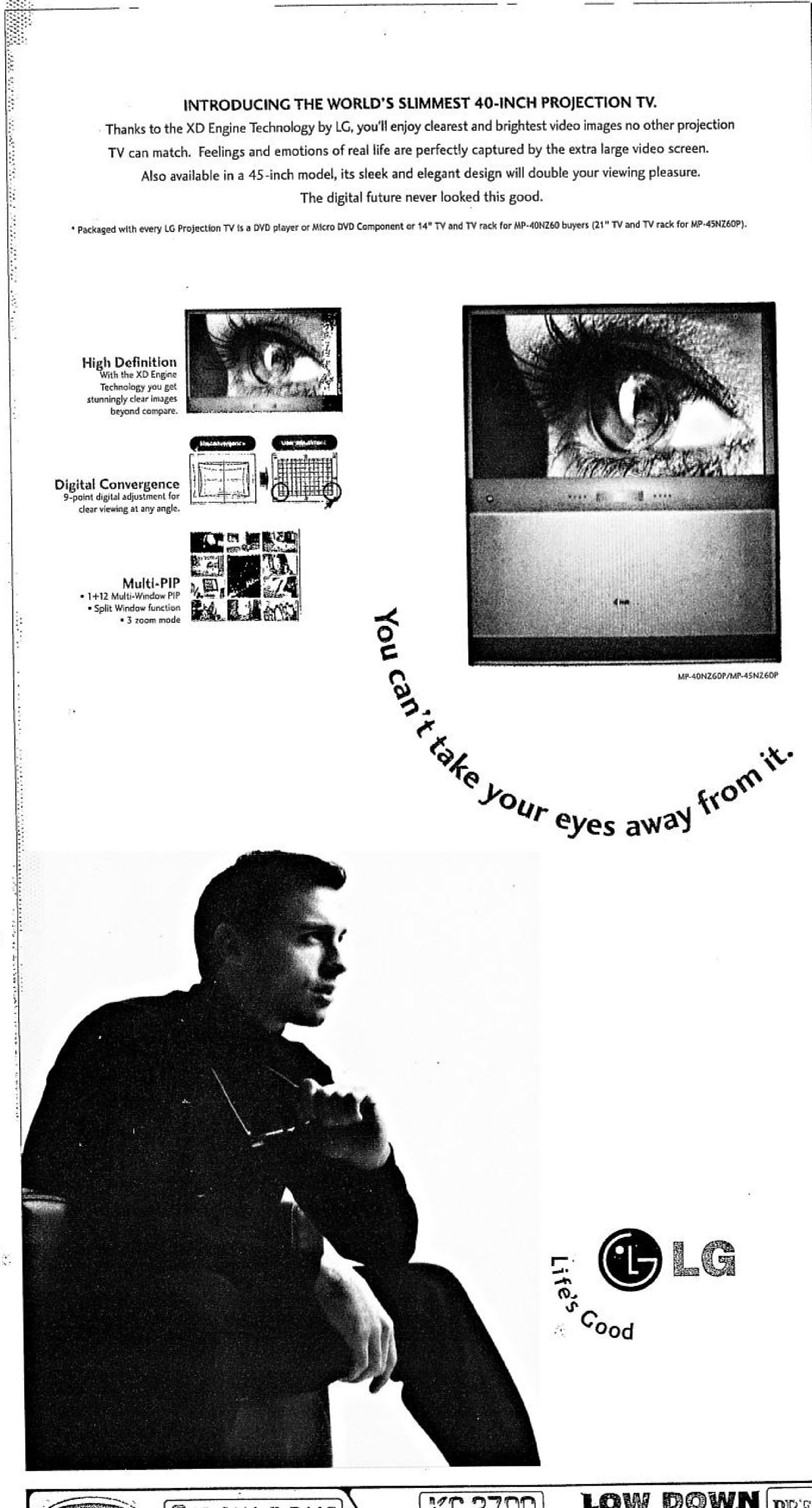
Call to bishops

Meanwhile, the militant women's group Gabriela has asked the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines to take its protest against the controversial ad to the streets for more impact.

In a letter to CBCP Office on Women executive secretary Zenaida Rotea, Gabriela asked the influential bishops' group to join the picket at 10 a.m. today in front of the Destileria Limtuaco office in Balintawak, Quezon City.

Various church organizations led by the Promotion for Church People's Response would be with the militant group in the rally that seeks to stop the showing of the brandy's commercial.

The women's group is now gathering signatures from women all over the country who are supporting the total ban on the ad.



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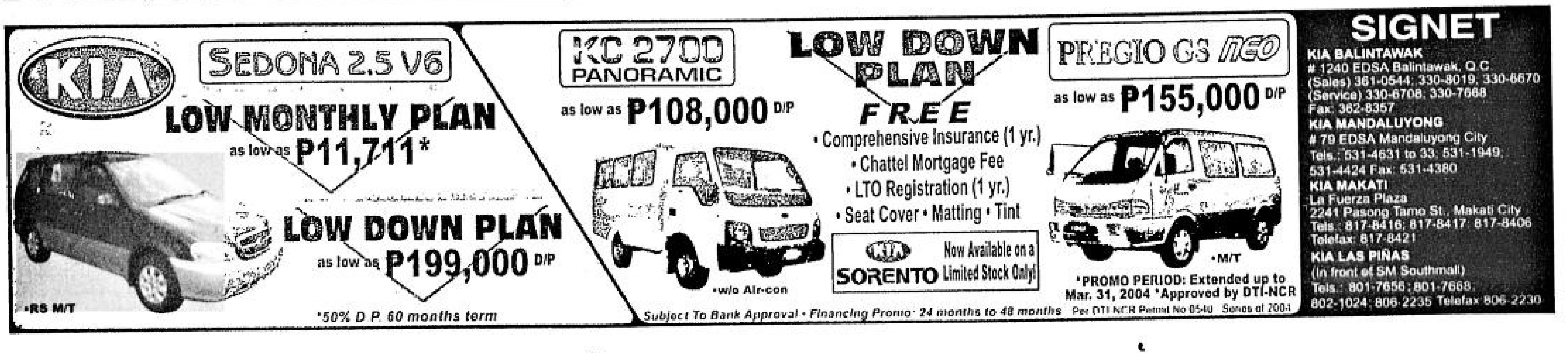
Simula na ang kampanya sa local elections. Kapansin-pansing maraming kandidato ang magkaka-apelyido. Di kaya dito sa Pilipinas, di lang pag-aari ng pamilya puwedeng ipamana? Pati puwesto sa gobyerno 'ata pam-pamilya! Ang sagot nina Malonzo ng Caloocan, Biazon ng Muntinlupa at mga Cayetano ng Pateros-Taguig. Ngayong alas-10 ng gabi sa ABC. (At may replay bukas, alas-8 ng umaga.)
ABC



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SPORTS

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SPORTS TV

BASKETBALL: NBA Greatest Games - Pacers vs Sixers, Game 1, 2001 Eastern First Round; 8:30 a.m.; Solar Sports - Indiana and Philadelphia open up the 2001 post-season with a memorable meeting.

NBA - Jazz vs Sonics; 11 a.m. (r-10 p.m.); Solar Sports; Kings vs Lakers; 8 p.m.; IBC 13 - Utah and Seattle, both of which are just outside the magic 8, try to snatch an all-important victory to improve their standing while bitter Pacific Division rivals Sacramento and LA slug it out at the Staples Center.

GOLF: LPGA Welch's/ Fry's Championship; 3 p.m.; ESPN - Final round action goes underway in Tuscon, Arizona.

Compiled by L. Manguiat

Unity Cup opens PBL on Sunday

By Marc Anthony Reyes

WHO will be the next Rich Alvarez, James Yap and Peter June Simon?

The PBL tries to come up with an answer when it unveils a brand-new season on Sunday with the 2nd Unity Cup at the Makati Coliseum.

PBL commission Chino Trinidad said the league will be focusing on discovering new talents after its big shots moved up to the PBA early this year.

"We lost our marquee players but it has always been the PBL's role to replenish the country's stock of basketball players," said Trinidad during yesterday's media launch held at the ABS-CBN compound.

Hapee Toothpaste and Welcoat Paints are again the teams to watch this season after undergoing major facelifts in their lineups. Completing the cast are Viva Mineral Water-FEU, Blustar Detergent, Sunkist-UST, Montaña Pawnshop and newcomers Toyota Otis-Letran and Lee Pipes-Ateneo.

The league just inked a three-year deal with network giant ABS-CBN which will carry the PBL action over Studio 23.

Trinidad said the deal assured the league of a wider television audience. Regular games will be held at the San Juan Gym, Pasig Sports Center and Cuneta Astrodome.

The commissioner also welcomed the entry of the two new teams, which are expected to infuse excitement to the league.

The Knights are the back-to-back champions in the NCAA, while the Eagles have three players with championship experience in Larry Fonacier, LA Tenorio and JC Intal.

Their mettle will immediately be put to the test right on opening day when Toyota Otis faces Viva and Lee Pipes battles Sunkist in the twin-bill which starts at 2 p.m.

AUSTRIA (left) with Mendoza during their Shark coaching partnership. PDI PHOTO

Barakos face Aces today

GAME TODAY (Cebu City Coliseum)
5:30 p.m.—Alaska vs Red Bull Barako

CEBU CITY—Red Bull Barako parades a well-rested DeAngelo Collins against Alaska today in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Cebu City Coliseum here.

Collins, the Barakos' fourth import of the series, wasn't much of a help during Red Bull's conquest of Barangay Ginebra in Antipolo City over the weekend after a long-haul flight from the United States on game day itself.

"Our game against Alaska will make an accurate assessment of Collins. With him around, we've grown big without losing quickness," said Red Bull Barako coach Yeng Guiao.

True enough, Alaska coach Tim Cone is wracking his brains on how to solve their match-up puzzle against the Barakos.

"We'll be having match-up problems against Red Bull because of their import. He (Collins) had seen limited minutes on floor so it's hard to tell," said Cone, whose Aces enjoy a second-running 5-1 record.

Nevertheless, Cone said Red Bull's offense begins and ends with Davonn Harp, the Asi Taulava of the Barakos. *June Navarro*

Austria new Shell coach

Turbochargers prevail

By Dennis U. Eroa

LEO Austria's back to where he belongs.

Yesterday, the native of Sariaya, Quezon, reached an agreement to replace the ineffective John Moran as head coach of Shell, where as a wide-eyed playmaker with an unorthodox jumpshot he won PBA rookie of the year honors in 1985.

Austria said he's letting Shell team manager Bobby Kanapi to make the formal announcement regarding his new job. Austria is expected to sign his contract today.

"It's just proper to let Mr. Kanapi make the announcement," Austria told the INQUIRER as he watched the Turbochargers' game against the Coca Cola Tigers yesterday at the Araneta Coliseum.

Austria said that coaching Shell is a dream come true.

"I feel like I'm coming home," said Austria, whose Zen-like coaching style produced three PBL titles while coaching the now-defunct Shark Energy Drink and Welcoat Paints.

"I would like to thank the Shell management for giving me the opportunity to coach in this level. I'm not going to promise anything, but I know what to do with the team. I can see the enthusiasm among the players and that will be a good start," said Austria.

Austria has a live contract with Welcoat in the PBL. But team owner Raymund Yu told the INQUIRER that he 'gladly' freed Austria from his contractual obligation.

"Coach Leo is a very decent man. I will never get in the way of his progress. Welcoat wishes him the best of luck," said Yu.

Austria will be assisted at the Shell bench by Dayong Mendoza and three-time PBA MVP Bogs Adornado. Mendoza was Austria's assistant with Shark and was a former member of the Philippine Youth coaching staff.

Meanwhile, Shell nipped Coca-Cola, 100-98, in the PBA Gran Matador Fiesta Conference last night at the Araneta Coliseum. Shell climbed to 2-5 while Coke dropped to 3-3.

In the second game, Sta. Lucia Realty banked on Derrick Brown's 40-point explosion to down Barangay Ginebra, 100-98, for its first win in six outings. Ginebra fell to 3-4. *With a report from Trina Ibarle*

SHELL 100—Hrabak 20, Ondera 18, Tubid 18, Bajar 11, Dela Cruz 8, Mamaril 7, Calaguio 6, Ferreria 4, Alvarez 4, Jackson 4, Bacani 0.

COCA-COLA 98—Sanford 51, Cariaso 14, Abarrientos 8, Hugnatan 6, Wainwright 6, Reavis 6, Morano 3, David 3, Antonio 2, Hawkins 0.

Quarters: 21-17, 45-46, 72-63, 92-92, 100-98.

IOC assures RP of Olympic coverage

THERE was no Manila blacklist and the glorious events of the Athens Olympics will be beamed to Philippine television, the International Olympic Committee assured yesterday, with NBN-4 getting an edge over other bidders for the coverage.

Michael Payne, director for broadcast of the IOC, brushed aside reports that the Philippines had been blacklisted (for coverage), stressing it's been the goal of the IOC to bring the Olympics to the most number of people in the world.

There were two other bidders, Solar Sports and Vintage Enterprises, but NBN got the inside track after it reached a compromise settlement with the IOC and the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) yesterday.

The compromise calls for NBN to pay its arrears of $1.2 million, obtained during the 2000 Sydney Games, to the IOC within April in order to retain the television rights.

John Barton, head of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), singled out their long, tested association with the government television station and said he would be back soon to make a formal announcement of the Olympic coverage arrangements for Philippine television.

The IOC, inside sources said, has agreed to reduce the TV rights to the Athens Games by more than half. However, there were doubts NBN-4 would be able to honor its Olympic commitments with no help from Malacañang. *Recah Trinidad*

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Pasay stuns Guangzhou

TAGAYTAY CITY—Pasay City stunned top seed Guangzhou of China, 3-1, in the fifth round of the 14th Asian Cities Chess Championship Tuesday night to share the lead with its victim and defending champion Pavoldar of Kazakhstan at the the Tagaytay International Convention Center here.

International Master Barlo Nadera and Oliver Dimakiling made things happen by beating their fancied foes, enabling Pasay to score the first major upset in the event organized by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines and the Tagaytay City government.

Fide Master Emmanuel Senador and Rodolfo Panopio split their games against the erstwhile unbeaten Chinese as the Pasay bets boosted their tally to 13 points, the same total posted by the Chinese and the Kazakhs.

The second seeded Kazakhs blanked Kanchipuram of India, 4-0, in the tourney backed by the League of Cities of the Philippines, Department of Interior and Local Government, Department of Tourism, Philippine Sports Commission, Manila Sports Council, STI, Character Convention and Tagaytay Haven hotels.

"The best we were expecting was a draw and we never expected we would win," said Pasay City team captain Louie Polistico. "This victory is truly a big one for us."

Senador, an Airman Second Class and board 4 topnotcher in the 2002 Asian Cities tourney held in Aden, Yemen, set the tone for Pasay when he forced International Master Liang Chiong, the second-highest rated in the event with an Elo of 2526, to a draw in 40 moves of a King's Indian Defense on board 1.

Nadera, a four-time Olympiad veteran, employed his favorite Benoni Opening to beat Grandmaster Li Shilong, who has a rating of 2526 compared with the Filipino's 2390, in 46 moves on board 2.

Dimakiling, whose former claim to fame was eliminating GM Eugene Torre in the 2000 Millennium Grand Prix, downed IM Yu Shaoteng with the black pieces after 70 moves of a Sicilian Defense. *With a report from Marlon Bernardino*

7 Lakes Invitational unfolds

TWO games will kick off the Panasonic 7 Lakes invitational basketball tournament today at the Aquino Stadium in San Pablo City.

It will be coach Luigi Trillo's Adamson University Falcons against the UA-Pampanga Pelicans of Msgr. Edgardo Pangan, Gil Cortez and coach Alexis Gonzales at 4 p.m. and the Cagayan de Oro Stars of coach Andy Calingin and Ferdinand Sanchez against the Spring Cooking Oil-San Pablo 7 Lakers of shooting champion Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and Mayor Florante "Boy" Aquino.

The opening ceremony of the tourney hosted by Mayor Aquino and sponsored by Sulpicio Lines will be held between the first and second games, according to National Basketball Conference (NBC) secretary general Tito Palma.

Side events like 3-points shootout and slam dunk will be held among the fans with the prizes donated by Sulpicio Lines and the other sponsors BJ Star Logistics, Nature's Spring Mineral Water and Molten Basketballs.

The Panasonic 7 Lakes event serves as a preview of the NBC national championship starting on May 22 in Baguio City.

Among the well-known players seeing action are Nani Epondulan, Rodel Manuel, Robin Mendoza, Jonathan Serrano and Mar Reyes of Spring-SP, Aldrich Reyes of Cagayan de Oro, Lito Puyat Cup MVP Kenneth Bono and Mark Abadia of Adamson and Dave Bautista, Willy Mejia, Pet Duyag and Billy Bansil of UA-Pampanga.

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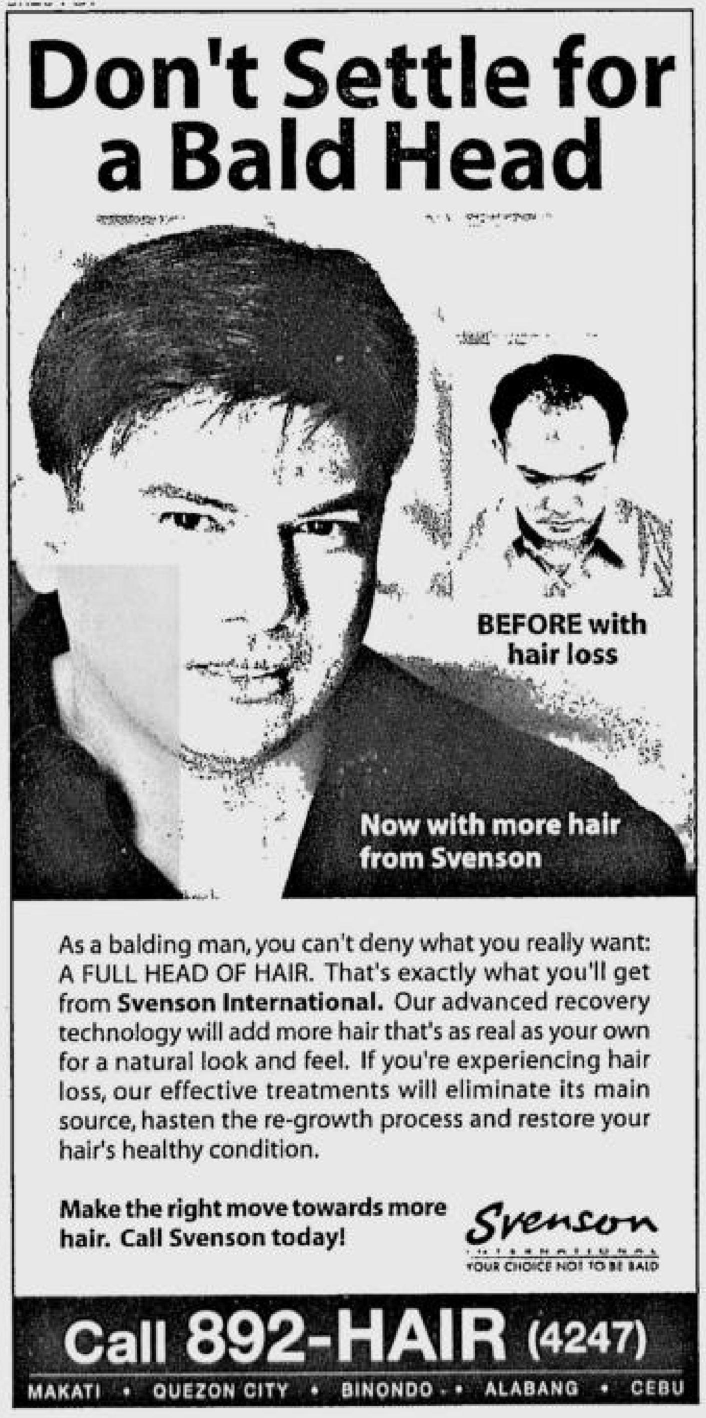

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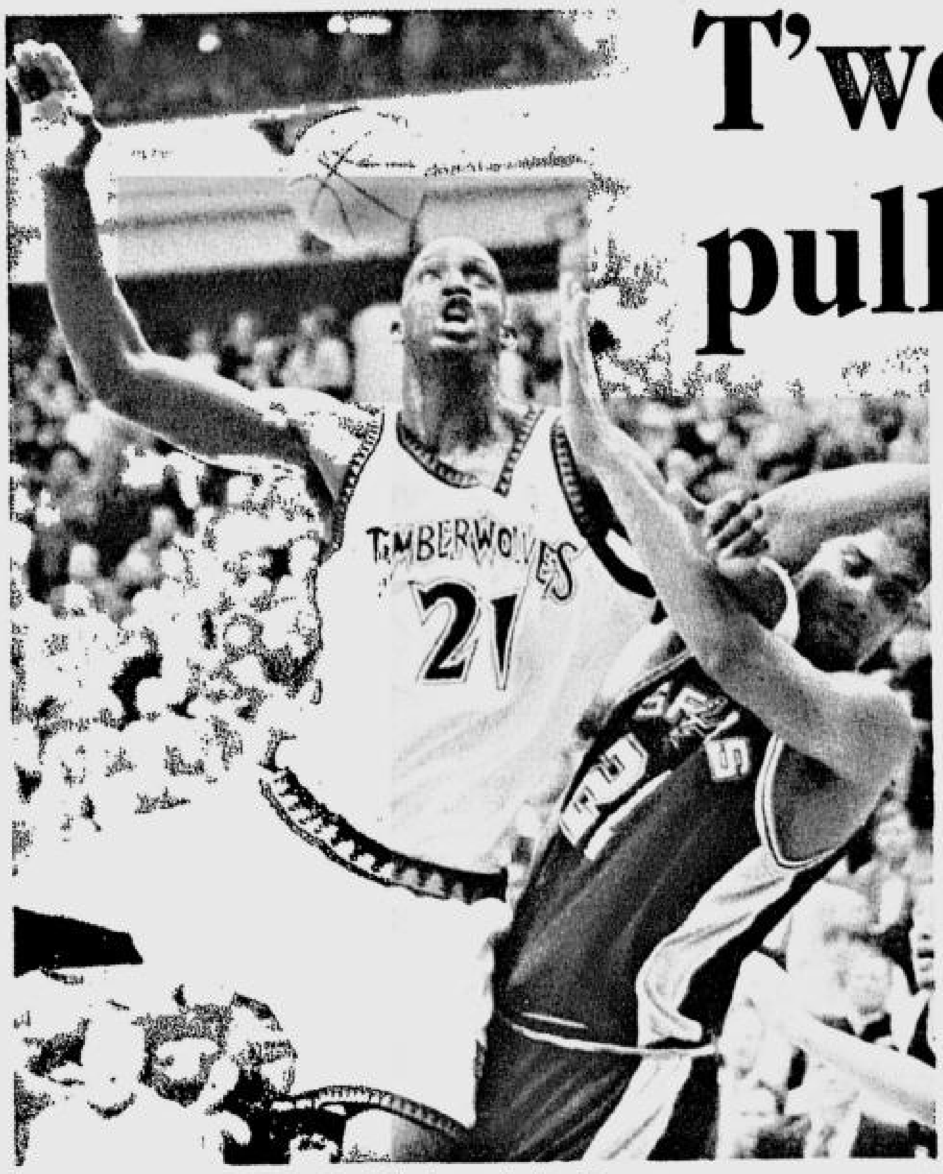
T'wolves whip Spurs, pull away in Midwest



GARNETT (21) loses control of the ball as he crashes into Duncan. AP

NEW YORK—The Minnesota Timberwolves surged three games ahead of the second-place San Antonio Spurs with an 86-81 victory in a clash of Midwest Division frontrunners Tuesday.

It was payback time for host Minnesota, which was humbled 106-86 in San Antonio last Thursday.

The Timberwolves, who locked up their eighth straight post-season berth Monday, received 27 points from team leader and MVP hopeful Kevin Garnett.

Garnett, who joined an elite group of 17 players with 13,000 points, 7,000 rebounds and 3,000 assists in a one-sided win over Denver Sunday, also grabbed 10 rebounds and dished out four assists.

Latrell Sprewell added 20 points and Sam Cassell, the third of Minnesota's big three, had 14.

Cassell pitched in with 10 rebounds and 11 assists for his first triple-double of the season, and the third of his 11-year career.

Reigning MVP Tim Duncan paced the Spurs, who won the second and fourth periods, with 26 points.

Hedo Turkoglu added 19 points and a team-high nine rebounds.

It was San Antonio's fourth successive road loss.

In New Orleans, Baron Davis finished two assists shy of a triple-double as the Hornets snapped the Detroit Pistons's eight-game winning streak with an 82-81 victory.

In Cleveland, Joe Johnson poured in 31 points to carry the lowly Phoenix Suns to an upset 103-86 triumph over the Cavaliers.

In Memphis, Pau Gasol picked up 29 points as the Grizzlies recorded a 95-86 win over the Toronto Raptors, who shot only 33 percent.

In Sacramento, the Milwaukee Bucks snapped a season-high five-game losing streak with a 112-101 win over the Western Conference-leading Kings.

Complete results: Phoenix 103, Cleveland 86; Minnesota 86, San Antonio 81; Memphis 95, Toronto 86; New Orleans 82, Detroit 81; New Jersey 84, Chicago 81; Utah 85, Washington 77; Milwaukee 112, Sacramento 101. *AP*

Sta. Elena Cup today; Dabao, pal head field

THERESE Dabao will have a new partner in Tracy Locsin when they try to retain the crown in the eighth edition of the Sta. Elena Cup, the member-guest invitational of the Robert Trent Jones Jr.-designed course in Cabuyao, Laguna, starting off today.

The first batch of the 220 participating teams tee off at 7 a.m. with the afternoon block plunging into action at 12:30 p.m.

Dabao, who partnered with Stephanie Yu in becoming the third all-female team to win the Cup last year, and Locsin will have their hands full competing against some of the best executive shotmakers in the country.

Foremost among them is the pair of Bones Floro and Tommy Manotoc who will be eyeing no less than a sweep of the net and gross awards in the tourney which has Globe Telecoms, Royal Carribean International, Northwest International Airlines, Omega watches, Toyota Motors Philippines and Mizuno/Master Sports as exclusive sponsors. Kart Plaza Mfg./Yamaha is hole-in-one prize donor.

Floro, also the clubhouse manager of Sta. Elena, is out to give Manotoc's bid for another major club plum a solid boost. Tommy and OV Espiritu had earlier made history in the Mango Tee with a double-kill of the low net and low gross plums.

Club president Edward Tiu, meanwhile, has Willy Soong as partner.

FLORO (left) with Ria Quiazon. PDI PHOTO

Kobe accuser to testify on sex life

DENVER—The woman accusing Kobe Bryant of rape will be forced to testify Wednesday about her sex life—a move some experts fear could discourage other women from reporting sexual assaults.

The 19-year-old woman will testify behind closed doors, but media members will be at the courthouse to report that she had to answer questions from defense attorneys about intimate details of her life.

"I'm frightened about this decision, only for the fact that families will not support victims and survivors to go report because they can now say, 'Look what happened to so-and-so,'" said Jeri Elster of Los Angeles, who was raped in 1992 and has lobbied for changes in the law. *AP*

SPORTSWATCH

Negros aerobics stars rule trios

UNIVERSITY of Negros Occidental-Recoletos aerobics' stars displayed a superb show last weekend to snare the individual female and team trio titles in the Globe Gentxt Invasion Sports Aerobics Marathon at the Riverside College gym in Bacolod City. Petite UNO-R coeds Clarie May Padios and Mary Grace Villasor finished first and second, respectively, in the individual female category while schoolmates Charmaine Rose Lorayna, Ma. Fe Salamisim and Mahdel Gayares grabbed the team trio trophy at the expense of another UNO-R team. University of St. La Salle dynamo Joener Sison prevented a UNO-R sweep by taking the individual male title over fellow USLS athlete Hernie Vingco. Ley Fernandez, Picaf (Philippine International Competitive Aerobics Federation) secretary general and head judge, and Gretchen Montelibano, a native of Silay City and Globe Gentxt assistant product manager, graced the awarding rites. Interested parties may contact Team Ventures Inc., the events management specialists, at (02) 400-9745 and (02) 522-5953 for more details.

Free basketball clinics at SM malls

SPORTSHOUSE and SM malls in cooperation with Burlington socks and Cherifer multivitamins will launch a free basketball clinic for boys and girls aged 8 to 18 years old and a basketball shootout for all ages. To be held at selected SM malls, the Burlington cage clinic will be conducted by noted national coaches and former PBA star players from 12 noon to 4 p.m. Participants need only to show a proof of purchase (any amount) of Burlington products (receipt/label) bought at any SM department stores or any item from Sportshouse outlets. The Cherifer basketball shootout, which will feature a "Bat My Score," 2 Ball, 3 on 3, 3 point shooting contests, follows the cage clinic at 4 p.m. Contestants must show proof of purchase (any amount) of Cherifer (receipt/label) or Sportshouse items to join the competitions and win exciting prizes. Lending support are Sunkist and Accel. For inquiries, call 894-3576 or 894-3014.

NCA derby gets under way

BIG-TIME cockers clash anew today as the "National Cockers Association (NCA) 7-Cock Derby" championship round gets going at the Araneta Coliseum with more than 50 matches scheduled. With three victories each going into today's finals are the entries of NCA 2004 Cocker of the Year top contender Mayor Nene Aguilar and Gery Ramos (St. Joseph Jok Jok JOk), Boy de Roca and Pol Estrellado (PEBR Firefly), Big Dome owner Jorge "Nene" Araneta (Thunderbird Firefly I), newspaper publisher Butch Macasaet (Greenwood Balbina), Jay Feliciano (San Francisco BJ JM Firefly) and Tony Marfori (Swing MG PM EC II). Today's hosts are Gov. Ito Ynares and businessman Gery Ramos. The next derby at the Araneta Coliseum will be held on April 13 and 15. The 7-cock derby promotion of NCA members Tony Tan, Tony Marfori and Pepito Ngo will push through as originally scheduled on March 30 and April 1 (Tuesday and Thursday) but it will be held instead at the Pasay City Cockpit. For other inquiries, please contact 911-3101 and 911-2928 (look for Gloria Avena).

Mandaluyong hosts 3-cock tilt

A GUARANTEED prize of P300,000 is up for grabs in the first ever 3-cock derby on April 3 at the new Mandaluyong Coliseum, now under the management of cockpit operators Jonion Abalos, Kags Paliza and Aba Badiola. Entry fee is P5,500 with a P3,300 minimum bet. At least 100 fights are scheduled, according to Badiola. Among the early registrants are Richard Ticson of Cavite, A. Pineda of Pateros, Ariel Adam and Manny Dayrit of Batangas, Ariel Geronga of Bulacan, Eric Daguinisn of Laguna, Ben Belen of Pasig, Rene Bondal of Makati, Rey Cabial, Cyrus Hao of Bicol, Edwin Domingo of Mandaluyong and Rey Magbuhos of Quezon Province. Meanwhile, scheduled today (March 25) is the regular 2-cock *ulutan*. Meanwhile, the regular "Malitan Lang 2-Cock Ulutan" every Saturday also starts at 8 a.m. Contact the Mandaluyong Coliseum at 532-2650 and 534-4110 for details.

Runnex fun runs unfold April 25

THE EXECUTIVE Runners Club (Phils.) Inc. of Quezon City will celebrate its 21st year with the holding of the Runnex fun runs on April 25 at the QC Memorial Circle to UP campus back. The event starts at 6 a.m. This was announced by Runnex president and race director Benedicto S. Fragante. The event is open to all runners. Cash prizes, trophies, medals, gift certificates, T-shirts, finisher's certificate and snacks are at stake. Entry forms are available at the following: Ringer Engineering (363--0357), Lulu Bercades (371-4445); Alda Buensuceso (922-7502); Lito Duran (248-0288); Rene Borlongan (926-2045).

PFF honoring 3 booters April 3

THE PHILIPPINE Football Federation will honor Pepe Teh, Joey Villareal and Anastacio Co in the 'Football Night', April 3, at the Manila Pavilion. Teh was a member of the famed Lions Football Club which became Champion of the Manila Football League for seven straight years in the '50s. He played for the national team in the 1958 Asian Games in Tokyo and in the 1962 Asian Games in Jakarta. He was the PSA's MVP for Football in 1958. Villarreal played for the national team for 12 straight years (1955 to 67).

Sportswriter's father passes away

PROF. Eustaquio Ordoño, a former Journal Group of Publication deskman and author of books Revenue Regulations and BIR Rulings, died Tuesday morning at the age of 70. He's the father of journeyman sportswriter Cesar Ordoño, Catalino, Angel, Filipinas and Esperanza of Bacoor, Cavite. His body lies at Don Bosco Charity Chapel in Makati City. Cremation is set on Saturday, 11 a.m., at the Manila Memorial Garden Crematorium in Sucat, Parañaque.

Caliraya Springs tourney reset

THE CALIRAYA Springs golf tournament originally set this coming Saturday, March 27, has been postponed for a later date, organizers announced yesterday. Members who have already signed up for the tourney marking the completion of the 18-hole course will be advised on the new date.

Ortigas CityGolf range opens tomorrow

A NEW sports landmark rises in the booming Ortigas business district with the opening tomorrow (Friday, March 26) of the CityGolf driving range, a practice facility where players can experience the thrill of hitting into an all-weather fairway and greens with the usual hazards.

With 43 hitting bays, CityGolf is spacious enough to accommodate the huge population of golfers in the surrounding exclusive villages like Valle Verde, Wack Wack and Green Meadows as well as those from Pasig, San Juan, Quezon City, Marikina and even Makati.

CityGolf, located along Julia Vargas Avenue in Barrio Ugong, Pasig, was designed to put the player in the near actual-conditions on the course of attacking the pins with its risks and rewards, according to its president Raoul Lachica.

All clubs in the bag can be used with the range's overall length of 250 yards minimum. The view from the hitting mats made of the Firebuilt brand from Canada is an undulating fairway of the Tifton 419 breed of grass and target greens guarded by a water hazard and sand traps.

"It's really golf in the city and more that's why we decided to call the place CityGolf," said Lachica.

There are locker rooms for both male and female clients of the range which will operate from day to night.

CityGolf will also house pro shops carrying major brands and adjacent to it is a commercial arcade with popular concessionaires of restaurants, coffee shops, a beauty salon, barber shop and boutiques.

Construction of five shops (adidas Taylor Made, Golf Depot, Golf Gallery, Golfworx and Fukuda Golf) is set to be completed soon while the list of concessionaires includes Gloria Jeans, Piazza Firenze, Raku It's Japanese, Kubo de Manila, Bacolod Manukan Express, Razon's of Guagua and Ncomo.

For inquiries, please call 683-0620 or e-mail citygolf@triisys.com.

Cornering the covenant

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I WILL monitor tomorrow's (Friday) scheduled meeting between organizers of the so-called "super body" in basketball and officials of the Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP).

Will it materialize or not?

But first, let us clarify matters.

Who are the organizers of this supposed "super body" in basketball?

From what I gathered, there were four persons listed officially as trying to form this "super body." Of the four, it's been confirmed that PBA Commissioner Noli Eala, PBA Chair Buddy Encarnado and either National University's Sonny Paguia or De La Salle's Terry Capistrano, or even Jun Jun Capistrano—all from the UAAP—were not among them.

I salute these five gentlemen. They know where they stand. They know their business.

Why did I say that?

Because like several of those who accepted invitations to attend the "super body" meeting the first time it was presented to us, they were shocked to learn that the gathering was about the formation of this supposed "super body" in basketball.

Two of those who were invited to join called me up afterwards to deny having been a party to the formation of the so-called "super body."

Said the two: "We never signified our intention to join it as some newspapers had alleged. We were there merely as observers."

My source said the PBA governors have not given any blanket authority to either Eala or Encarnado to commit the PBA to the "super body."

Some of the top officials of the UAAP and the NCAA have called me up to say their groups are not supporting any move to form a basketball "super body."

So again, what "super body" in basketball are we talking about here?

"*Drowing lang yan*, Boss," said Valentin Dakuykoy, my irrepressible legman.

But I won't unmask the identities of the four persons trying their damnedest to form their so-called "super body."

It's been confirmed: One of them wants to become BAP president to replace the duly elected Tiny Literal. Another wants to become BAP secretary general.

Again, I am not naming names. Not yet.

But to let you in on one secret, one of the four instigators is a certain official of the Philippine Basketball League (PBL); I withhold his identity in the meantime pending confirmation of his real name from a source who said he would talk only on condition of anonymity.

I gave her my word.

But to get back to where we were.

In a subsequent meeting, it was reported by the papers that a covenant is to be drafted by the PBL's Chino Trinidad and Butch Maniego. They are supposed to present the draft in tomorrow's scheduled meeting.

While I am very much interested in the contents/wordings of this planned covenant—assuming it would be presented at all as the newspapers had reported last week—I am more thrilled at the thought of BAP officials suddenly attending tomorrow's meeting.

But has there been a written invitation for the BAP to attend tomorrow's meeting?

If the answer is yes, who signed the invitation?

I can't hide my excitement.

Will the BAP honor the invitation if such is forthcoming—if it hasn't been sent yet?

Gut feel tells me the BAP won't show up. They may yet buy my line: There is no "super body" bigger than the BAP.

And they'd be absolutely right as they'd been absolutely right all along if they'd do that.

Now if the BAP people should show up at all, they must insist immediately for a copy of the covenant. Next, they would excuse themselves before meal is served and say as parting words: "Thank you, gentlemen, for your invitation. We will study this covenant and we will get back to you ASAP. Good day."

Don't forget to say, "bon appetit."

***

FASTBREAK. Shell's choice of Leo Austria as its new coach is tinged with drama. Do you know that this is the 20th anniversary of Leo's ascendancy as the PBA Rookie of the Year in 1985? Listen: Leo was then Shell's starting point guard when he won the award. How time flies, really. And yes, I believe that by taking in Bogs Adornado and Dayong Mendoza as your assistant coaches, you are bringing in freshness in the country's coaching landscape. Good luck, Leo.

Dayrit meets NSAs today

By Marc Anthony Reyes

PHILIPPINE Olympic Committee president Celso Dayrit is set to meet today with representatives of 34 national sports associations to discuss what events will be included for each discipline in the Southeast Asian Games next year.

The NSAs will be given a free hand to put in events in their respective sports based on the country's winning chances in the biennial event, according to POC spokesperson Gus Villanueva.

However, there will be guidelines binding them from exercising such right to the hilt after the SEA Games Federation approved of the new regulations last year in Vietnam.

The meeting is set at 9:30 a.m. at the Cafe J in Makati.

One thing going against the country, according to Villanueva, is that starting next year the SEAG host can't just add in "artificial events" or events not approved by their respective international federation and thereby not traditionally played internationally.

"For example, we can't just hold three-on-three streetball as part of the basketball event," said Villanueva.

Still, the NSAs can choose which among the events carry the best promise for the country, particularly in certain events in billiards and shooting where the Philippines is favorite.

Elorde Awards tonight

THE GREATEST in Philippine pro-boxing the past year and the personalities that produced what is considered the largest assembly so far of world and international champions will be honored tonight during the Gabriel "Flash" Elorde Annual Awards at the Dusit Hotel in Makati.

International Boxing Federation superbantamweight champion and Ring magazine's world featherweight titleholder Manny Pacquiao leads 15 international champions and 14 Filipino titlists who will be honored in what is also dubbed the Flash Elorde Banquet of Champions hosted for the fourth straight year by the clan of the country's greatest boxer of all time.

Although Pacquiao will not be around to receive the highest accolade, the Boxer of the Year award, for the third straight year because of his training in the US for his next fight, he will be represented by his manager Rod Nazario.

KEON presents the overall championship trophies for both elementary and secondary to Gov. Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during the courtesy call of the delegation. Also in photo are most bemedalled athlete Kimberly Pacubat, Department of Education officials headed by Aaceli Pastor (schools division superintendent), Antolin Ucol (division sports coordinator) and Dr. Norma L. Fernando.

Ilocos Norte rules IRAA

ILOCOS Norte kept the overall championship for the fifth straight year in the recent Ilocos Region Athletic Association (IRAA) meet in Urdaneta City, Pangasinan.

The province, benefiting from the efforts of the Ilocos Norte Sports Development Council headed by Michael Keon, topped both the elementary and secondary divisions with plenty to spare.

In the elementary division, Ilocos Norte won in girls' athletics, boys and girls' gymnastics, boys' taekwondo and girls' baseball, football and sipa to accumulate 563 points. Pangasinan 2 was a distant second with 396.

In the secondary division, Ilocos Norte triumphed in girls' athletics, boys' and girls' archery and boys' and girls' gymnastics, girls' swimming and taekwondo and boys' table tennis, chess, baseball and softball en route to 368 points, 37 points above Pangasinan 2.

Ilocos Norte showed its superiority in batted games by sweeping the games in Little League baseball, secondary baseball and girls' secondary softball. Its secondary baseball team created IRAA history by being the first team to shut out its opponents by not yielding one run and posting winning scores of 21-0 and 18-0.

Aguilar marked man in Asian 'moto' tourney

ALL eyes will be on Revtex Rocket Glenn Aguilar when the 2004 FIM International Motocross Championships-Motocross Masters of Asia unfolds on March 27-28 on a four-hectare track near the Puerto Princesa City hall.

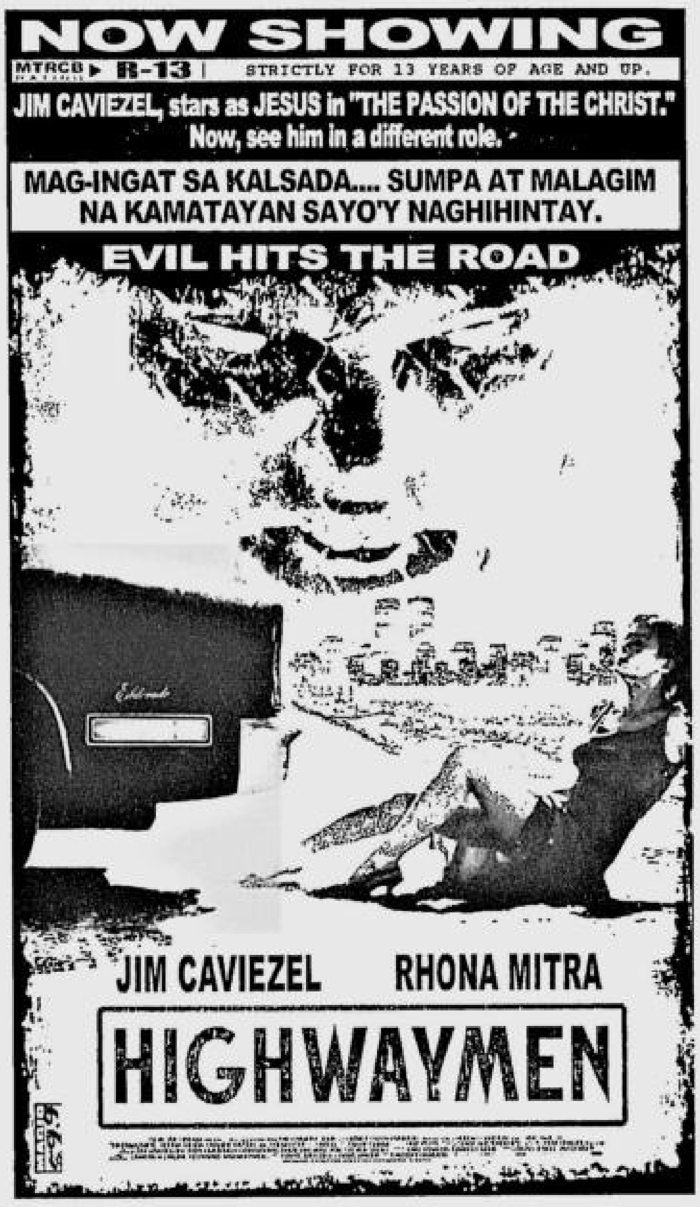
Aguilar, the FIM defending champion, will be a marked man when he takes on Asia's best riders, including first leg winner Tadakazu Ohtsuka, Indonesian national champion Aep Dadang, New Zealand's James Robinson and Australia's Christian Horwood.

These and several other world-class bikers such as Asian champions China's Xu Wen Min, Thailand's Chakrit Rungsuwan, Guam's Tony Boy Camacho, Malaysia's Haslizam and India's Chika Vijayakumar will be going all out to frustrate Aguilar right at his home turf.

"Everybody will be after my scalp and they want it done here in my territory," admitted the 27-year-old seven-time national rider of the year who became the first and only Filipino to have won the Asian Supercross title last year.

Aguilar finished a fighting second in the first leg of the FIM series held in Bali, Indonesia, behind Japanese sensation Ohtsuka.

Aguilar is also backed by Sidi Boots, Renthal, Oakley, HJC Helmets, Sukida Motorcycles and Pro Grip. "It's just the start of a long series and, hopefully, I can bounce back mightily in Puerto Princesa in front of thousands of our *kababayans*."



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Heart Evangelista: 'I wan

BECAUSE she's now endorsing a school, Heart feels she has to act smart.

Her face is plastered practically everywhere, reaching places persistent political campaign posters can't touch

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit,
Contributor

ACTRESS Heart Evangelista has outgrown her "kikay" image.

Now possessing more maturity, she is more comfortable at being someone that younger kids can look up to.

"Being a role model is not something I'm pretending to be," she says during a recent interview. "I'd be pressured if that's what ABS-CBN (where she is under contract) wanted me to be. But if I know that it's me, and I'm just being myself, I'm not pressured at all.

"I'm not KJ. But everything I do, *nasa lugar*," she says. "I wanna make a stand, because kids are really different now. I'm only allowed to go out and gimmick now that I'm 19. I'm not *nagmamalinis* or anything, but you should have values. That's not corny. That's not *baduy*. It'll make a difference!"

She had little inkling how popular she would be when she first entered the business, but felt that she could make good use of her growing fame even then.

"I just wanted to see myself on TV. But when I got into show biz, I told myself, 'I can do so much. I could prove something.' It's okay to have fun and let your hair down, as long as you're not *nagkakalat*. You have to carry yourself well," she claims.

Multi-tasker

The ultimate young multi-tasker, Heart acts, sings, hosts, and endorses; her face plastered practically everywhere and reaching places persistent political campaign posters can't touch.

Endorsing a slew of products since she was 14 has made Heart knowledgeable in what companies to represent, saying that she carefully chooses brands that only fit her personality and lifestyle.

Studio 23's 'Boyfriend' more than just comedy

THE ROMANTIC comedy "Ang Boyfriend Ko" captures the humor in the relationships of its lead character Marvel Julian, who has three girlfriends.

Produced by Studio 23 and Ideal Minds Corp., the show makes an interesting must see for teenagers who prefer Pinoy wit over slapstick.

Now on its second season, "Ang Boyfriend Ko" is not just about pretty faces and marvelous acting; it's a concept-driven comedy that raises the bar of local sitcoms.

When asked how he deals with fans who marvel at his ability to string along several girls, Marvel quickly exclaims, "I wish they would realize that Marvel is not having an easy time and that he didn't really mean to have more than one girlfriend. It's difficult enough having one girlfriend. Look at all the stress he has to deal with by having three!"

Far from encouraging the behavior of cheating, the makers of the show said they "just wanted to do something different and reflect a very real occurrence in our society." They also wanted to put the sense back into humor.

"Ang Boyfriend Ko" is about the reality that some guys do play around. It also asks if they are really satisfied at the end of the day.

The show is aired every Thursday, 7 p.m., on Studio 23.

RGMA, Mike Enriquez to appeal KBP decision

RADIO GMA and Mike Enriquez strongly disagree with the ruling of KBP that the statements of Mike Enriquez on radio constitute personal attacks against ABS-CBN.

This is according to a statement sent by RGMA to INQUIRER Entertainment last week.

It said that Mike Enriquez merely reported the factual allegations in the complaint, which GMA filed against ABS-CBN and various cable companies before the regional trial court and the NTC for signal distortion and unlawful merger, consolidation and corporate combination.

These statements did not originate from Mike Enriquez, the statement said. They are true and fair reports on a matter of public interest and concern, it added.

RGMA and Mike Enriquez shall appeal the ruling and elevate the matter to the courts if necessary, according to the statement.

Gretchen graces 'Summer Glam'

TELEVISION and movie actress Gretchen Barretto will grace the week-long fashion fair called "Summer Glam" in a mini-fashion show at the Activity center of SM Megamall, Bldg. A, on April 3.

As image model of Plains & Prints, Gretchen will also preside at the ceremonial ribbon-cutting at 4:30 p.m. of the new SM Megamall branch of the store.

Gretchen's fresh summer look in Plains & Prints' new advertising campaign displays her glamorous and effortless beauty in Plains & Prints clothes. The fair will kick off on March 29 until April 4.

The event will feature daily fashion exhibits, raffles, henna tattoo and caricature booths, massage booths by The Body Shop, sampling booths for new Plains & Prints perfume line and dance presentations from dansa studio and live band music on March 29 and April 4.

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Winners can instantly get the prize indicated on the game stub at the participating Globe Telecom Business Center. Winners will be given instructions as to where and what time the meet-and-greet sessions will be.

Promo period: March 21 to March 26, 2004. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1336, Series of 2004.

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na make a stand, make a difference'

She is especially honored to endorse a school this time.

"I should be more careful now, so I won't be perceived as an airhead. I have to appear and be more educated about everything. Before, I just needed to know about makeup, style, and fashion trends," she explains.

She is talking about her endorsement of the ABE International College of Business and Accountancy, where she is already enrolled in a certificate course for Hotel and Restaurant Management.

Heart considers this ad campaign a big responsibility, hoping that students will ultimately choose the school because of its features, not only because they were drawn to her image.

"I'm flattered, although I think they should enroll because of the course they want. And if I serve as an inspiration, I'll do my best to go to school every day whenever I can," she said.

The 19-year-old is still finishing her high school education at the Distance Learning Center and shuttles between showbiz and academic responsibilities like every other sought-after young entertainer.

She has long realized that her high grades—an average of 89.3—as well as her unending thirst for knowledge will come in very handy when she decides it's time to finally leave the limelight.

Priorities

But she acknowledges that life away from the camera won't be happening any time soon. Heart, however, is prepared to excel in an altogether different arena: "In show business, people will berate you if you're not smart. I think *artistas* should take time for their studies. They should know their priorities. It's very, very important. Big stars come and go, so after this, what would they do?"

She recently finished obligations with the teen soap "Berks," as well as with Repertory Philippines' play "Beauty and the Beast." She also finished her VJ duties with the music channel MYX. Her workload has slightly lightened now, but she nevertheless keeps herself open for various other opportunities that keep popping up.

Few suitors

Heart, who claims she has no boyfriends, admits that she has a few suitors. But she says she only goes out with them in the company of her friends. She does her best to avoid the corrupting temptations that permeate the business, but claims that if ever her show biz friends fall into such traps, she would help them recover. Being an idealistic do-gooder isn't even a choice, according to the young woman.

More mature roles

Heart is looking forward to doing more mature roles because of her transition into someone people can take more seriously. But she opts to accept roles reflecting her age, at least for the time being: "If I really do mature roles, like Claudine Barretto's in the movie 'Kailangan Kita,' that's really challenging. But I won't do it now, because I'd like to maximize the roles that I now play before I go to something like that."

She says that when she began years back, she wasn't forced into any manufactured image. ABS-CBN's Talent Center head honcho Johnny Manahan thought it would be contrived to give her an image that concealed her natural vivaciousness.

"Mr. M told me that I was *maarte* in the bubbly sense. But it set me apart *naman*. I wasn't trying to be that way. I agreed to be myself. They never changed that, because your true personality will always come out, anyway."

s Fernandez, Mark & Yasmien* of Starstruck, Jay-R, Erik Santos* and Francis M.
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See flyers for more details.
Per DTI-NCR Permit No.0399, Series of 2004.

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TIVES UP TO THE SECOND DEGREE OF CONSANGUINITY OR AFFINITY ARE DISQUALIFIED FROM JOINING THE PROMOTION.

Rio Diaz's cancer stalls husband's campaign

By Carla P. Gomez, *PDI Visayas Bureau*

BACOLOD CITY—A new round of chemotherapy treatment using a new drug brought former television host Rio Diaz to the US. And instead of staying here to campaign for his reelection bid as legislator of the fourth district of Negros Occidental, Carlos Cojuangco, Rio's husband, left for the US last Friday to be with his wife.

Cojuangco left with his children Claudia, 9, and Jayme, 7. He left after meeting with his leaders in the fourth district and helping Jayme celebrate his birthday with his classmates at St. John's Institute in Bacolod.

While the legislator skipped the opening of his campaign, his son Jayme will also miss his graduation from kindergarten on Tuesday.

"Rio is trying a new medicine and I want to be there," Cojuangco said. He added that his wife had wanted him to be with her.

"We need your prayers so things won't be that bad for my wife," he said.

Rio, whose battle with cancer started in late 1998, has had several remissions. The most stunning was early last year when she woke up from a 10-day coma, surprising doctors who were not too hopeful that she would recover.

Cojuangco said Rio had been reverted to a milder, tablet-form of chemotherapy after that. But last January, she showed signs that she could not continue with the medication.

Last month, Rio underwent two procedures and would soon be undergoing the new chemotherapy, Cojuangco said.

The legislator said he is not sure when he can return from the US. But he is confident his campaign would proceed even without his physical presence.

NBI nabs brother of ex-child star

By Joyce Mejillano and Ronnie Lorejo
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY—The National Bureau of Investigation arrested here on Sunday afternoon Michael Benedicto, brother of former child star Vanessa "Sugar" Benedicto, after his wife complained that he had kidnapped his two children.

After two years of hiding, Benedicto, 32, was arrested at about 3 p.m. at the Swiss Inn in Guevarra Subdivision, Barangay Cabangan in this city, according to lawyer Raymundo D. Sarga Jr., NBI Legazpi district office head.

The arrest came after Benedicto's wife, Lina Torres Benedicto, of Virac, Catanduanes, charged him with kidnapping before the regional trial court here, for his failure to return his two minor children.

Sarga said Benedicto took their two children, aged four and two, in 2002. He said Benedicto had admitted that he did not want his wife and two children to meet.

Torres arrived here from Catanduanes on Tuesday afternoon. She said she is determined to get her children back. She claimed that she had found out her husband married two other women, so she is longer interested in reconciling with him.

Sarga said they are now waiting for the children who will be coming from Davao City. Earlier, Benedicto had claimed the children were just in the area.

Sarga said kidnapping is a non-bailable offense and is punishable by death. He said that after Benedicto's arrest was reported over some local radio stations, another person had accused Benedicto of car theft.

He said Benedicto had been under surveillance for quite sometime, along with his sister, Sugar, who is also facing arrest, along with her husband Rolando Cordero, for allegedly abusing her own children, theft, and a drug-related case.

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Capacity to delight

'50 First Dates' has unique hook, capacity to delight

IN THE MOVIES, just like in the business world, you've got to have a Unique Selling Proposition to stand out and really make it. Thus, in "Sleepless in Seattle," the most popular romantic comedy movie produced in the past 10 years, the radio romance between **Tom Hanks** and **Meg Ryan** disarmed many viewers.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Since then, numerous films have been made in a determined effort to come up with another big audience-pleaser, but only in a few romantic comedies have had a similarly effective USP or "hook," and capacity to delight.

The latest audience-charmer is the current film, "50 First Dates," topbilling **Adam Sandler** and **Drew Barrymore**. The lighthearted movie's unique hook is the fact that its female protagonist (Barrymore) suffers from short-term memory loss, the result of a car accident that jiggled her brain something fierce, causing her to forget anything that's happened to her after one day.

Thus, when Sandler falls for Barrymore in a big way, she reciprocates his love—but only for 24 hours. The following day, she's completely forgotten that she's even met him, and he has to start wooing her all over again!

You can imagine how frustrated—and exhausted—Sandler's character feels after a while. Lesser men would just give up and find a less forgetful girl to love!

But Sandler is made of more sterling romantic stuff, so he plays for keeps, even when Barrymore breaks up with him to save him from a lifetime of constant frustration.

Of course, Sandler refuses to take the easy way out, and ultimately captures his forgetful beloved's heart for keeps. Not because she gets over her mental condition but her heart learns to remember what her mind forgets. Aw, gee!

Yes, it's that kind of illogical, so-in-love denouement, but that seems to be OK with most viewers, who embrace this movie's determinedly roseate view of love and life with romantic relish.

Another plus point is the fact that Sandler plays a veterinarian at a zoo, so a number of cute and smart animals charm the socks of viewers with their droll antics.

Also appealing are the cast's antic performances, including some far-out cameo capers turned in by Fil-Am talent **Rob Schneider**, a character actress who plays Sandler's "manly" zoo associate, a mature actress who is cast as the owner of a diner, and the old curmudgeon who is her most caustic customer.

On the debit side, too much is made of Barrymore's family's elaborate scheme to prevent her from finding out that her memory has been so drastically abridged. The scheme is quite complicated, but it ends up confounding viewers, rather than impressing them.

Still "50 First Dates" remains generally viewable, and even occasionally delightful. It charms with its unusual tale about the vagaries of the mind—and the steadfastness of the loving heart.

Feedback

FROM Paul R. Mortel: "I suggest that one of the many theaters in malls show vintage Tagalog movies like 'Bondying,' 'Waray-Waray,' 'Anak Dalita,' 'Siete Infantes de Lara,' 'Ikaw Kasi'—in other words, old Sampaguita, LVN and Premiere movies from the '50s and '60s.

"I think there is a ready market for this type of vintage movie fare!"

Matthew Perry joins 'The West Wing'

"FRIENDS" star **Matthew Perry** tackles his first high-profile dramatic role in Studio 23's "The West Wing" in a two-episode appearance starting on March 28 and ending on April 4.

Perry plays a young lawyer applying for a position as special White House counsel who may or may not be hiding something from the Bartlet leadership.

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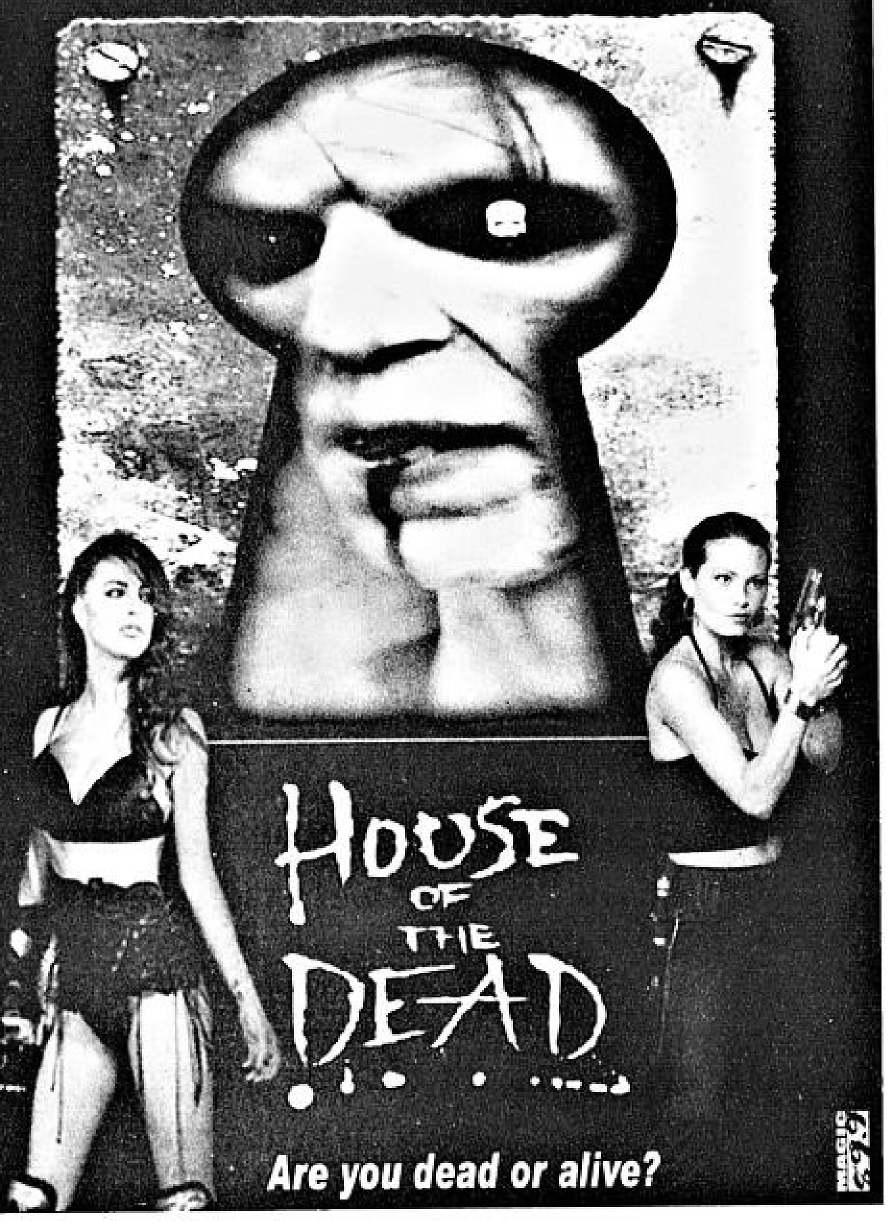
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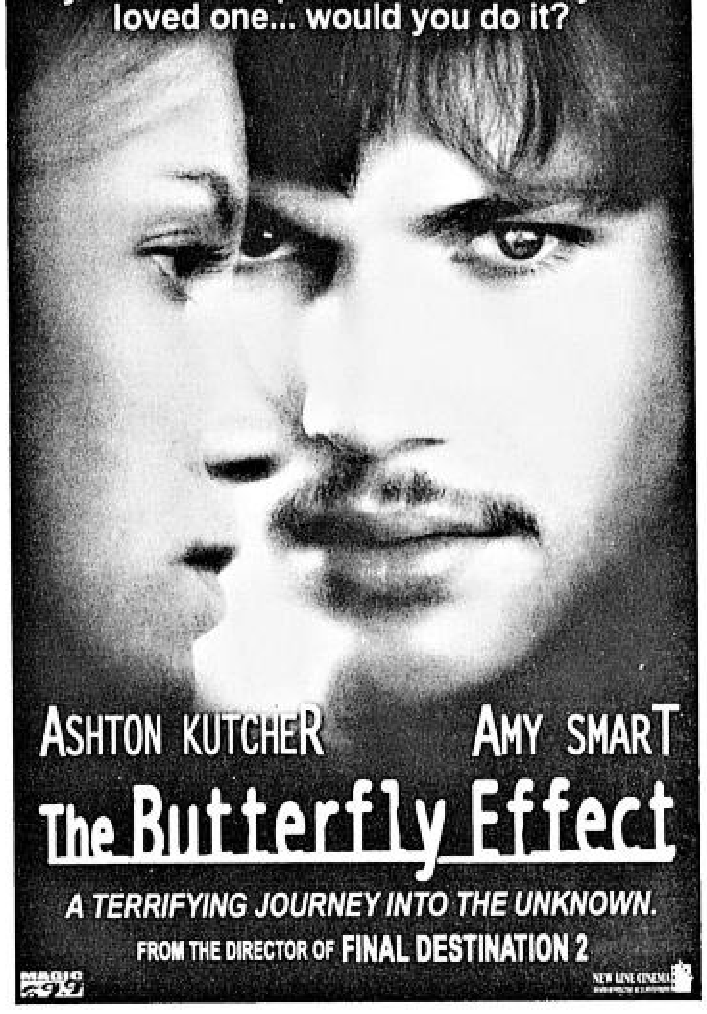
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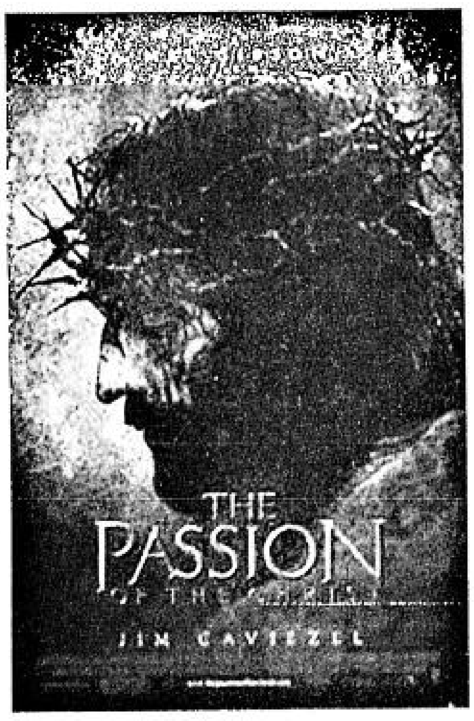
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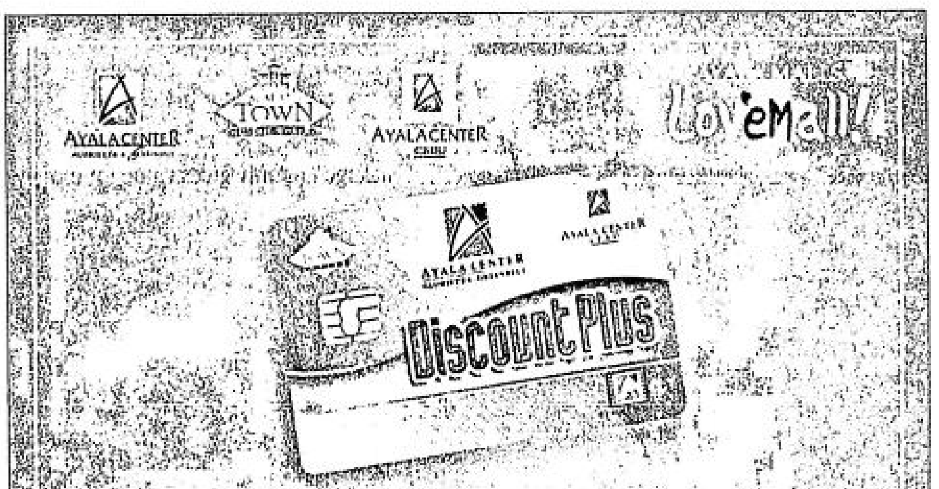

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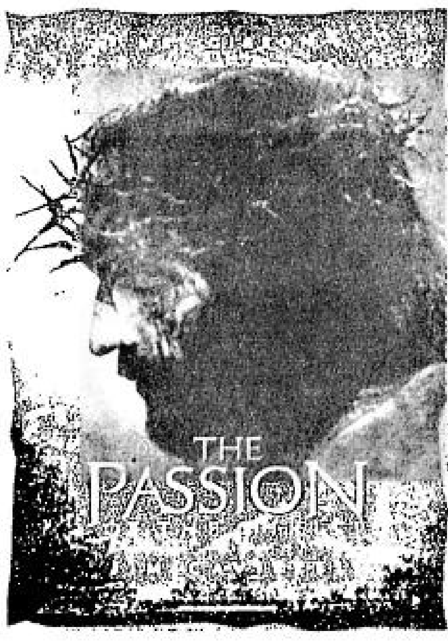

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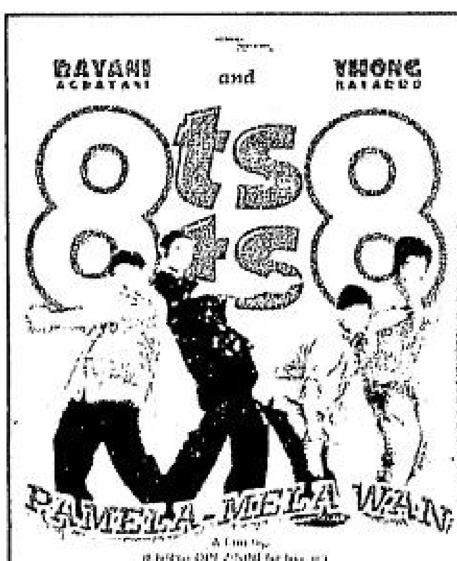

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More movies on pages B4 and B5.

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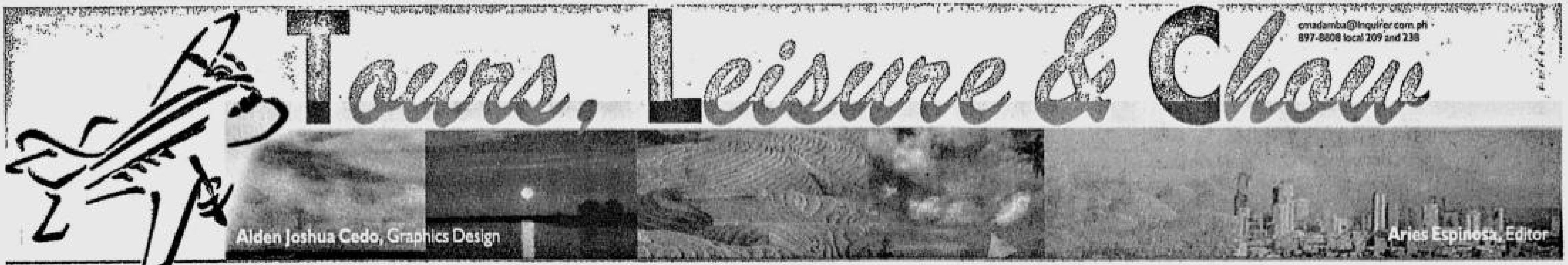

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Wonderland at Dusit Hotel Nikko

STEP into a world of wonders as we celebrate "Easter Wonderland" at Dusit Hotel Nikko on April 11, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the grand ballroom.

Bring the family (maximum of 4 persons) and enjoy the hotel's first-ever family egg hunt at our enchanting garden. Chances to win major prizes like accommodations in beach resorts, toys, pets and more are at stake. Bring that one-of-a-kind Easter basket to win in the What a Basket! contest, open to kids aged 3 to 10 who register their jazzed-up entries on April 11, 9 a.m. Kids can also go creative and win in the My Easter Garden Drawing Contest for kids aged 5 to 10 who dine at the Café from April 1 to 10. Aside from all these, enjoy the Benjarong Royal Thai Restaurant's "Appetizer Varieties-Thai Style" until March 31.

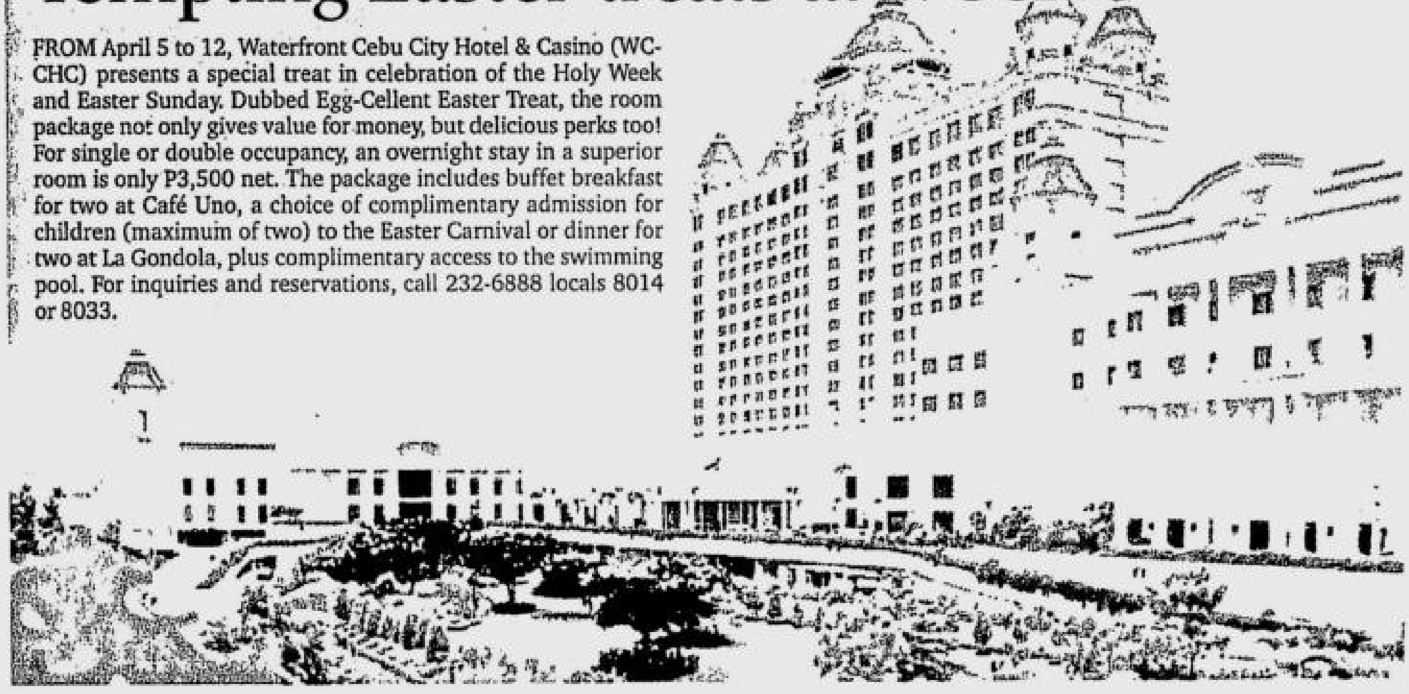
The event is supported by Viva Mineral Water, Nestea, Nido Milky Bars, Milo Chocolate Bars, Silver Cup Chocolates, Smarties, Columbia's, M&M, Tender Juicy Hotdogs, Purefoods Chicken Nuggets, Regent Food Corp, Filstar Distributions Corp, Coralyn, Learning is Fun, Richwell Trading, Kidz Station, Little Tikes, Brittany Corp, Leslie's Corp, Pearl Farm, Maribago Blue Water, Waling-Waling Beach Resort, and Tambuli Beach Resort.

To join Easter Wonderland, guests must avail themselves of the Easter Sunday Brunch Buffet at The Café or dine in any outlets of Dusit Hotel on Easter Sunday where a minimum single receipt of P850 gets two free entries. Option to pre-pay P850 for dining in any of the outlets is at the ballroom entrance. Walk-in rate per person is P350.

Guests availing themselves of the Easter Family Room Rates pegged at P1,950 per person or the P2,800++ for room accommodation only will get a discounted rate of P250 plus an Easter giveaway for kids. For queries, call 867-3333.

Tempting Easter treats at WCCHC

FROM April 5 to 12, Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino (WCCHC) presents a special treat in celebration of the Holy Week and Easter Sunday. Dubbed Egg-Cellent Easter Treat, the room package not only gives value for money, but delicious perks too! For single or double occupancy, an overnight stay in a superior room is only P3,500 net. The package includes buffet breakfast for two at Café Uno, a choice of complimentary admission for children (maximum of two) to the Easter Carnival or dinner for two at La Gondola, plus complimentary access to the swimming pool. For inquiries and reservations, call 232-6888 locals 8014 or 8033.



The Bellevue Hotel—the businessman's preferred hotel

THE BELLEVUE Hotel, the first 5-star full-service business hotel in the Alabang area, recently hosted The Wallace Business Forum, a friendly discussion designed to help CEOs of local and multinational companies better understand the country's economic, business and political environment.

"We have always been known as the social venue in the south, but with events such as the Wallace Forum, businesspeople have come to recognize the hotel as the fitting venue for their business dealings. Our broadband Internet connectivity, wireless Internet access, state-of-the-art audio-visual facilities and spacious meeting rooms give hardworking executives that added advantage," says general manager Cyndy Tan-Jarabata. Wireless Internet connection can be accessed at the Lobby Lounge, function rooms, ballroom and the hotel's Café D' Asie.

The forum was facilitated by economist Peter Wallace, who independently assessed the Philippine business environment centering on the upcoming elections and legislation relevant to firms and conglomerates. Guest speaker Senator Ramon Magsaysay Jr ably answered queries of expats, CEOs and investors who attended.

As The Bellevue is also equipped for rest and relaxation. There is the Café D' Asie Asian Specialty Restaurant, lively 20/20 entertainment center, an infinity pool with poolside barbecues, fully equipped gym, health spa and 222 deluxe and suite rooms. For inquiries, call 771-8181.

InterContinental Manila's Visita Iglesia Packages

OBSERVE a beautiful Philippine Lenten tradition with InterContinental Manila by joining the Visita Iglesia pilgrimage to seven historically significant churches in Tanay and Laguna on April 8. Churches on the itinerary include the Edsa Shrine in Quezon City, Church of St. Ildefonso in Tanay, Rizal, Our Lady of Candelaria Church in Mabitac, Our Lady of Nativity Church in Pangil, Our Lady of Turumba Church in Pakil, Church of St. Gregory the Great in Majayjay and St. John the Baptist Church in Liliw, Laguna. Pilgrimage includes air-conditioned bus roundtrip transfers, the services of a pilgrim master and a licensed English tour guide, snacks at Villa Lorenza and lunch at Exotik Restaurant.

Choose from two special room packages for a comfortable journey. The one-night package is at P4,200 net per person (twin sharing) or P6,200 net (single accommodation). The two-night package is at P5,200 net per person (twin sharing) or P7,200 net (single accommodation). Packages are inclusive of deluxe room accommodation, Visita Iglesia tour on April 8, buffet lunch or dinner on April 7 at Cafe Jeepney, check-in on April 7 at 12 p.m. and late check out on April 8 upon arrival (12 noon).

For bookings, call 815-9711 extension 231 to 233. Pilgrimage slots are limited. Confirmed and paid bookings before March 26 get a P500 discount on package rates. Valid for local residents only.

Happy Easter Special Promo

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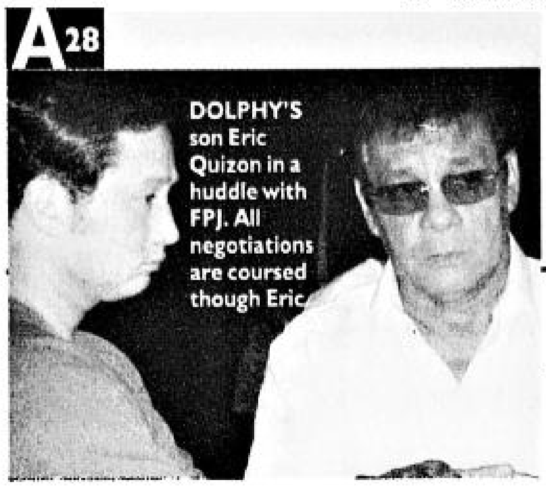

DOLPHY'S son Eric Quizon in a huddle with FPJ. All negotiations are coursed though Eric.

ENTERTAINMENT

ABC 5 offer to Dolphy: Double ABS-CBN talent fee

THE COMEDIAN with Susan Roces in the studio where Poe's jingle is being recorded.

By Marinel R. Cruz

ABC 5 has offered Dolphy his own show in the station at double his talent fee in ABS-CBN.

This is according to a source close to the comedian, who is said to be losing his Channel 2 sitcom "Home Along Da Airport" because he campaigned for his good friend and presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

Aside from ABC 5, GMA 7 and the independent production company M-Zet, have also indicated interest in Dolphy's services after his contract with ABS-CBN expires in June.

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. has been Dolphy's home studio for more than a decade.

All negotiations are being coursed through Dolphy's son, actor-director Eric Quizon, the source said.

Comedian and Sen. Vic Sotto is one of the owners of M-Zet Productions. INQUIRER Entertainment tried to reach Sotto for comment but could not contact him through his cell phone.

So far, ABC 5 has quoted the highest offer at double Dolphy's talent fee in ABS-CBN, according to the source.

Dolphy reportedly met yesterday with ABS-CBN executives Gabby Lopez and Charo Santos-Concio at the comedian's home in Marina Bay, Pasay City.

"They had a closed-door meeting," the source said, "so that it would not leak to media."

ABS-CBN has reportedly backtracked from its decision to cancel "Home Along Da Airport," said the source. The comedian has resumed taping for the show today.

Dolphy is set join Poe in his campaign rally in Cebu on Saturday. But Poe supposedly told the comedian, "*Kahit hindi ka na sumama, kung mapapahamak ka lang sa* Channel 2 (It's okay if you don't come, if that would cause problems for you with Channel 2)."

As stipulated in his ABS-CBN contract, Dolphy is not allowed to discuss his pending departure from the network. The stipulation prevents Dolphy from saying "anything derogatory" against ABS-CBN, the source said, adding that the contract also prevents Dolphy from resigning from the show.

Earlier, ABS-CBN insisted that Dolphy is not leaving the network anytime soon. The network had also denied pressuring its talents to support President Macapagal-Arroyo and her running mate Noli de Castro, who is a news talent of the network.

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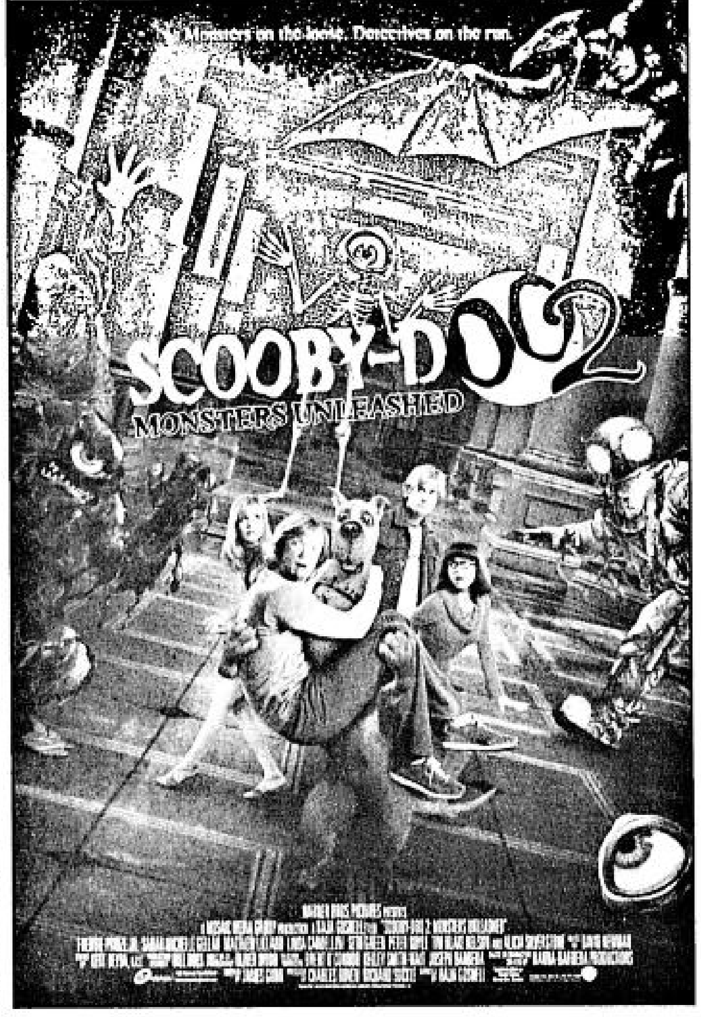
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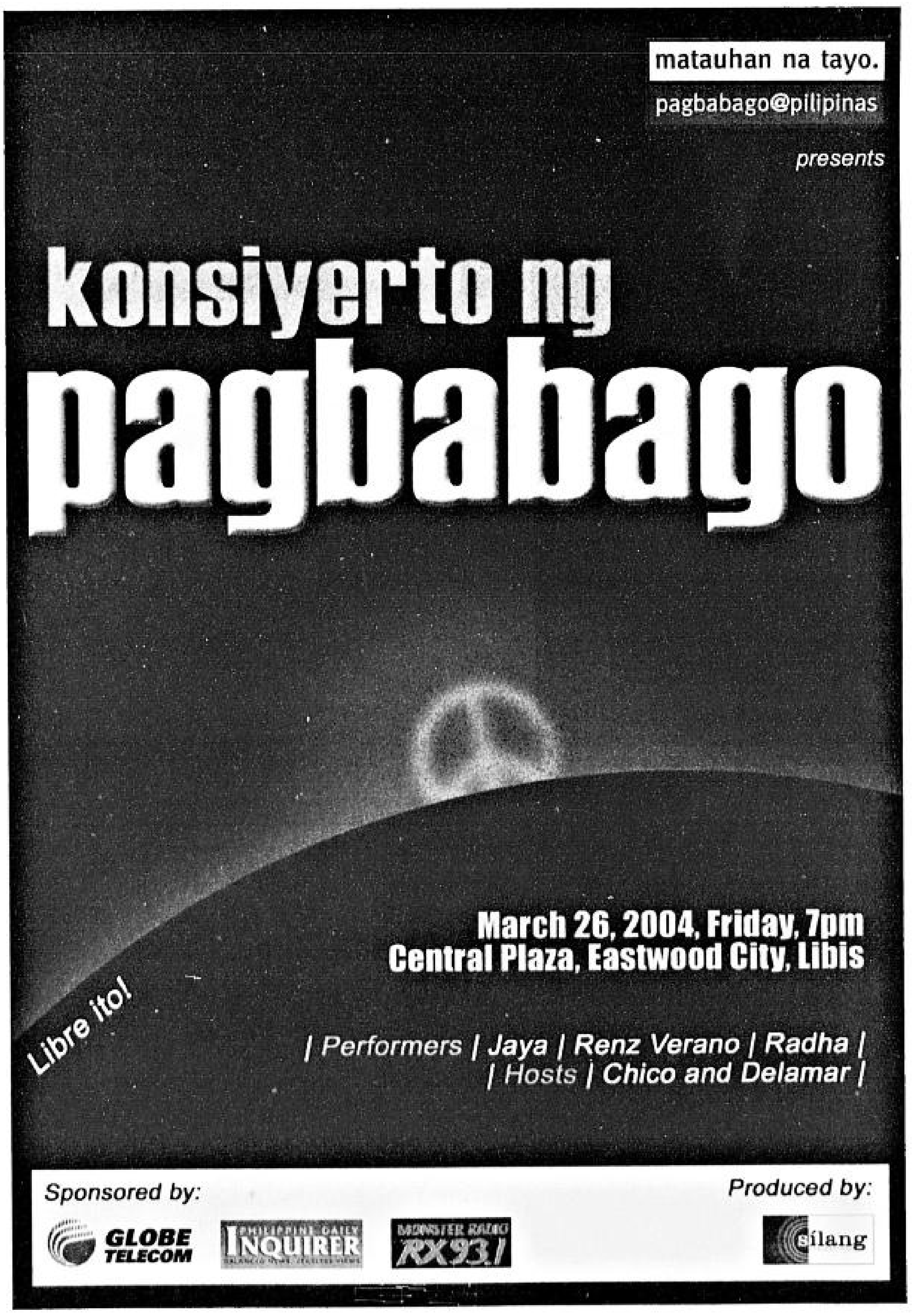

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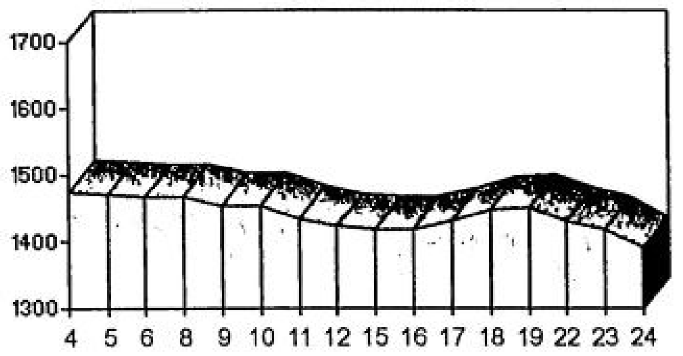
Stocks hit 3-mo low on economy woes

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

STOCKS led by dominant telecom companies fell to a three-month low yesterday, dragged down by news of a higher budget deficit in February and concerns over the weak peso.



The decline in the local equities market defied the rising trend being experienced by its neighbors. *(See related story on page B3.)*

"Global concerns and domestic political mudslinging are expected to remain in the coming sessions. This will cause the market to sustain its weakness and provide a negative backdrop for the major markets," Jovis Vistan of AB Capital Securities Inc. said.

Globe Telecom Inc., a unit of conglomerate Ayala Corp. and Singapore Telecommunications, fell 5.49 percent or P45 to P775.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), the country's largest phone firm, dropped P10 to P905.

Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel), the country's third-largest mobile firm and 45-percent owned by PLDT, finished 5.62 percent or 10 centavos lower at P1.68.

Investors had been favoring telecom stocks, betting they would gain from an anticipated flood of calls and text messages around the May 10 national elections.

But gathering gloom over the economy helped deflate that optimism yesterday.

"Basically, the budget deficit, although within target for the first quarter, was higher from last year. There's fear that the government might breach its full-year target considering the elections," said RCBC Securities stocks analyst Edwin Mendoza.

"I guess foreigners are just selling off their holdings."

The gap between the government's spending and revenues rose 4.3 percent in February from a year earlier, leaving doubts over whether the government could meet its closely watched deficit target for the first quarter.

The main index dropped 2.03 percent or 28.86 points to 1,389.87 points, its lowest since Dec. 12, 2003. Value turnover rose 79 percent to P878.37 million from Tuesday's P490.68 million.

In the broader market, losers beat gainers 42 to 11 and there were 34 stocks unchanged.

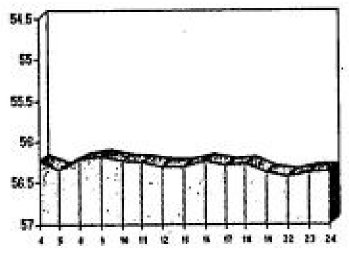
While the peso has recovered slightly after touching a record low of 56.45 to a dollar on Monday, analysts said investors remained wary of its direction ahead of the May 10 national elections.

"The political situation has been there for months. There is not one particular adverse event that can be said to have caused the fall (yesterday),"an analyst from a top local brokerage firm said.

"There might be a technical correction in the next sessions since the market has been down for three days. It should consolidate. We're looking at the 1,380 to 1,430 range," said Mendoza. *With a report from Reuters*

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



MARCH

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 56.36 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 24, 2004

Y 106.72 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 24, 2004

GOLD: $416.30-416.80

per ounce Hong Kong, March 24, 2004

March 24, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.810964	1.000000	56.4120
Japan	Yen	0.007597	0.009368	0.5285
United Kingdom	Pound	1.500527	1.850300	104.3791
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.104042	0.128294	7.2373
Switzerland	Franc	0.644492	0.794723	44.8319
Canada	Dollar	0.608741	0.750638	42.3450
Singapore	Dollar	0.480742	0.592803	33.4412
Australia	Dollar	0.609839	0.751993	42.4214
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.151213	2.652661	149.6419
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.216263	0.266674	15.0436
Brunei	Dollar	0.479321	0.591051	33.3424
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000094	0.000116	0.0065
Thailand	Baht	0.020541	0.025329	1.4289
UAE	Dirham	0.220803	0.272272	15.3594
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.233100	69.5616
Argentina	Peso	0.283306	0.349345	19.7073
Brazil	Real	0.277917	0.342700	19.3324
Denmark	Kroner	0.134290	0.165593	9.3414
India	Rupee	0.018110	0.022331	1.2597
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.213440	0.263193	14.8472
Mexico	New Peso	0.073872	0.091091	5.1386
New Zealand	Dollar	0.535892	0.660808	37.2775
South Africa	Rand	0.124358	0.153346	8.6506
Korea	Won	0.000700	0.000863	0.0487
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024464	0.030166	1.7017

INTEREST RATES

March 24, 2004-MART1 Rates

Benchmark Interest Rates	MART1 24-Mar-04	MART1 23-Mar-04
1 Month	7.73	7.6967
3 Months	8.115	8.04
6 Months	9.1247	9.0317
1 Year	9.9817	10.0017
2 Years	10.7333	10.7117
3 Years	11.5518	11.5804
4 Years	11.805	11.8317
5 Years	12.1983	12.2417
7 Years	12.5267	12.73
10 Years	12.6654	12.955
20 Years	13.0817	13.2167
25 Years	13.3517	13.465

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG

Ayala Land eyes leisure dev't projects

PROPERTY giant Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) is venturing into leisure community development next year and has lined up several projects for this year as well.

ALI expects to kickstart its North Triangle regional mall, a joint development with the Metro Rail Transit consortium, later this year. Financing for the project is estimated at P2.6 billion.

ALI is also launching today the "Serendra," its first residential undertaking since it acquired a controlling stake in Fort Bonifacio Development Corp. and Bonifacio Global City.

Through Serendra, ALI expands its reach toward the middle- and high-income markets.

While ALI officials declined to reveal the project cost, they said funding would come mainly from the proceeds of its pre-selling activities.

Part of its budget for capital spending this year would be used for the housing development, said Angela Lacson, senior vice president and head of ALI's residential buildings group.

ALI is offering studio and one-bedroom units between P3 million and P6 million, respectively, with the unit cost rising to as much as P18 million for the high-end buyers. Unit sizes range from 36 square meters to 223 square meters.

The first phase will consist of 586 units and is expected to be completed by 2007.

ALI has set aside P5.6 billion for its various projects this year, up from P5.2 billion last year.

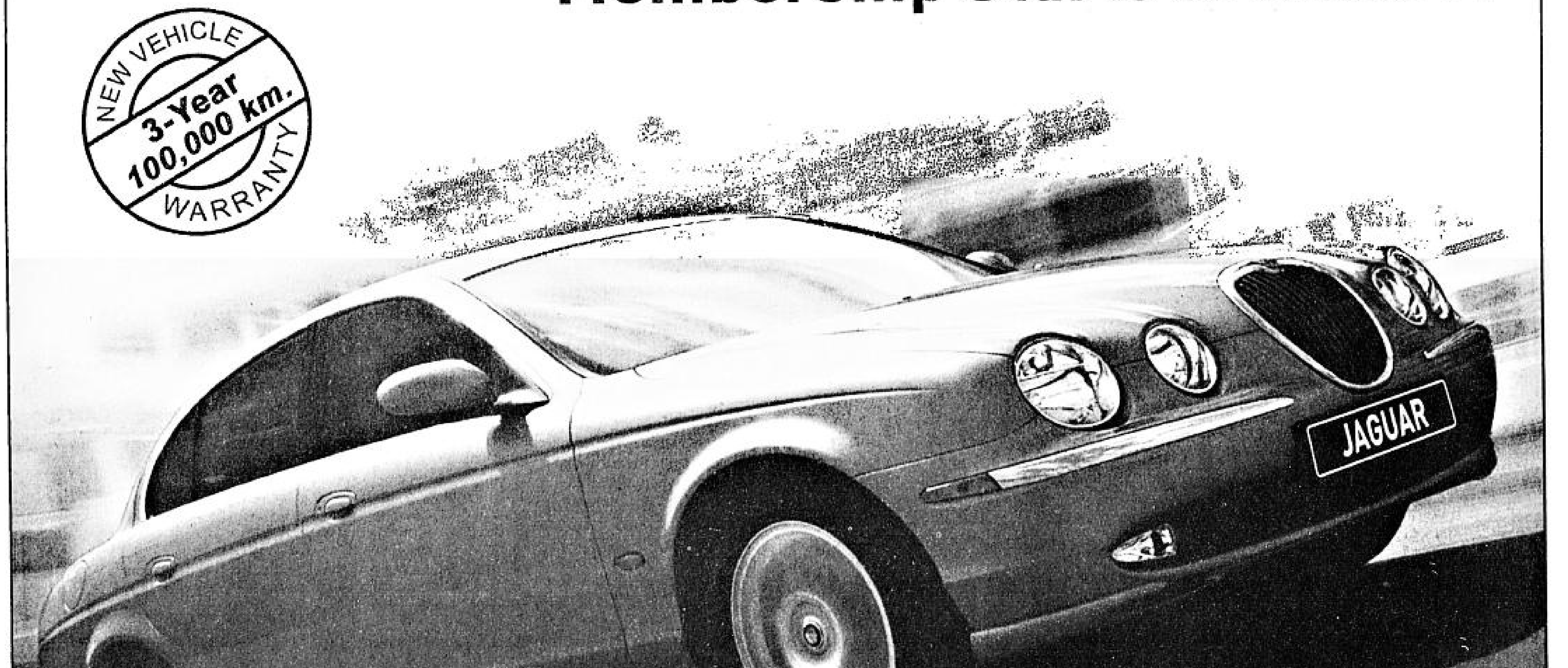
Including its housing subsidiaries, capital expenditure was set at P9.5 billion this year, also higher than last year's P8.2 billion.

ALI chief finance officer Jaime Ysmael said that ALI has yet to decide on whether or not it would bid for the remaining 45-percent stake of the Bases Conversion Development Authority in FBDC.

The remaining 55 percent is held by Bonifacio Land Corp., which is owned largely by ALI and the Campos group.

Outgoing ALI president Francisco Licuanan III said the BCDA was considering selling its stake and has appointed a financial adviser to value the property development. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

Membership Starts at 3.550 M



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Japan agency keeps investment grade rating on RP foreign debt

By Doris C. Dumlao

JAPAN Credit Rating Agency Ltd. yesterday said it had maintained its investment grade rating on the Philippines' long-term foreign currency debt but had likewise kept its "negative" outlook owing to uncertainties brought about by the election season.

In a statement yesterday, Japan's largest credit rating agency said it had also assigned a new rating to the country's domestic currency senior debts of "BBB" but "also with a negative outlook."

JCR's rating of 'BBB' on the country's long-term foreign currency debt is two notches higher than those assigned by non-Asian global rating agencies such as Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings.

The Japanese firm said it would scrutinize what policy and new measures the new administration would pursue after the elections.

"If it can be judged that various reforms centering on fiscal reforms will be steadily continued (which will make it more likely for the country's fiscal position to improve in the medium-term), JCR may consider upgrading its rating outlook to stable," it said.

"On the contrary, if it is adjudged that maintaining fiscal discipline and continuing the fiscal reforms will become harder (which will make it more likely for the fiscal position to deteriorate in the medium-term), JCR may have to consider downgrading the rating," it explained.

The rating agency noted that the May elections was shaping up as a fight between President Macapagal- Arroyo and popular actor Fernando Poe Jr. It also expressed concern that the election had dimmed the prospect of fiscal reforms.

"It appears that maintaining the good fiscal performance attained in 2003—controlled expenditures and strengthened tax revenue collection—will face many political difficulties," JCR said.

JCR likewise warned of the consequences of the peso's freefall against the US dollar due to election-related jitters.

"The peso's further depreciation would lead to negative impacts such as increased inflation pressure, higher interest rates and greater burdens of external debt repayment, which could impede the country's sustainable economic growth," it said.

But despite the "occasional political instability," JCR recognized that the country had maintained a relatively stable macroeconomic performance and external balance so far.

"As for its fiscal position, one of the most crucial problems for the country since it deteriorated seriously in 2002, the fiscal reforms being carried out by the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo have begun to produce effect gradually," JCR said, noting the reduction in the fiscal deficit to P199.9 billion in 2003 versus the P202-billion target.

The government's economic managers welcomed the result of JCR's annual sovereign review on the country.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the latest assessment was "good" enough.

"The negative outlook should go away after the elections. That is there only as a precaution," Buenaventura said.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, for her part, thanked JCR for "appropriately recognizing the inroads that this administration has made toward achieving fiscal discipline and instituting reforms amid the various structural and political challenges we have faced."

She noted that JCR, being an Asian rating agency, had a more open perspective on the country's progress.

"Asians understand Asians," she said.

SOVEREIGN GUARANTEE

Gov't not paying P6.6B claimed by SSS

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT is not inclined to pay the Social Security System some P6.6 billion in sovereign guarantee that backed a loan that turned sour.

The SSS had extended P30 billion in loan to the National Home Mortgage Finance Corp. to partly finance its Unified Home Lending Program (UHLP) which ran from 1988 to 1995. About 22 percent of the loan was guaranteed by the government.

SSS assistant vice president Maribel Ortiz said her office was hoping to collect the guarantee since the loan soured. The SSS official said the collection of the guarantee was provided under the restructuring agreement the SSS had with NHMFC.

However, the government was not inclined to pay the amount that the SSS wanted to claim.

According to a government official, NHMFC should first exhaust all means to dispose of its non-performing housing loans and pay the SSS before the pension fund could collect from the guarantee.

"If NHMFC will later be proven insolvent, that's the only time they (SSS) can go to the national government to collect the guarantee," said the government official privy to the matter.

However, the government source said that the government, instead of entertaining the SSS' request to collect the P6.6 billion, was helping NHMFC find ways to dispose of its non-performing housing loans.

NHMFC has tapped Ernst & Young as financial adviser for the sale of the agency's non-performing loans. The government source said NHMFC, through its financial adviser, was trying to formulate a strategy for the non-performing loans.

DOE seeking support for P82-B power program

TAGAYTAY City—Energy officials are set to unveil today the P81.6-billion Luzon Island Transmission Augmentation program (LISTA) before business and local government officials.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. and National Transmission Corporation (Transco) president Alan T. Ortiz will be meeting here with leaders of the Cavite Chamber of Commerce and Industry, military and police officials, civic and consumer organizations and representatives from the academic community.

The DOE and Transco, through this meeting, aims to secure multi-sectoral support for the on-time completion of the short-term and medium-term components of the Lista.

According to Ortiz, Lista seeks to transform the Luzon power grid into a highly reliable and efficient electricity highway over the next decade.

Ortiz earlier told Quezon and Laguna leaders that several Lista projects had already started implementation. Among these are the Batangas Transmission Reinforcement Project (BTRP) and the Binan-Dasmarinas transmission line upgrading project.

Sy group moves to secure board seat in PCI Equitable

MALL magnate Henry Sy is spearheading an alliance of minority stockholders of Equitable PCI Bank to gain foothold in the bank's board and bolster its bid to acquire the 29-percent block in the country's third biggest bank.

Banking sources yesterday said the SM group, which was already holding minority shares in Equitable PCI, was aggressively soliciting proxies to be able to install a representative to the bank's board, while its buyout deal with the Social Security System was still being finalized.

This was confirmed by sources from the SM group, who said they would likely be able to gather enough proxies from minority shareholders to install at least one board representative during Equitable PCI's stockholders meeting on April 20.

If the deal with the SSS would push through, the SM group would be entitled to four more representatives in the 15-member Equitable PCI board. However, the deal is still subject to a review and clearance by the Department of Justice.

"Remember that Equitable PCI still has about 25 percent public float. We should have enough proxies to vote at least one director," a source from the SM group said.

The source said the Sy family started the solicitation of proxies only recently but claimed that the support from the minority shareholders was "overwhelming."

HENRY SY

"Equitable PCI is being run by a group which doesn't even own the single biggest stake. We want to make sure that the voice of the minority shareholders will be heard," the source said.

Banco de Oro Universal Bank, the banking arm of retail tycoon Henry Sy, has a binding agreement to buy out the 29 percent stake held by the SSS in Equitable PCI.

Doris C. Dumlao

RP air rights negotiating panel expanded

By Clarissa S. Batino

MALACAÑANG has issued an executive order revising the composition of the country's air panel to include representatives from the Philippine Air Lines and Cebu Pacific, the country's two biggest aviation firms.

Since 2001, the air panel that negotiates aviation rights and privileges with other countries was composed solely of government representatives.

Airline firms welcomed the reconstitution of the air panel under Executive Order 296, with PAL president Avelino Zapanta saying that it was about time that local carriers were again given representation.

"Official Philippine carriers and the private sector in the tourism industry are major stakeholders in air services agreements (ASA) and similar arrangements, and thus should be allowed to participate in the negotiations of such as members of the single negotiating panel," said President Macapagal in a two-page order.

Local airline companies can send one representative each to sit on the Philippine air panel.

"Thank God. We have long been asking for it. It's about time," Zapanta told reporters.

PAL and Cebu Air used to form part of the air panel until 2001 when Malacanang issued EO 32 that excluded officials of the two airline firms from the negotiating team. The order restricted the membership of the panel to the heads of the departments of transportation, tourism, foreign affairs and the Civil Aeronautics Board.

Sources said Malacanang issued the EO to appease local carriers that opposed the government's move to open Clark and Subic to foreign aviation firms.

EO 253 signed in December last year gave foreign cargo carriers unrestricted access to the Clark Special Economic Zone and the Subic Bay Freeport Zone where the Diosdado Macapagal and Subic Bay International Airports are located.

2 groups to handle P600-M PUV insurance

THE LAND Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board said it would adopt a two-management group system for the implementation of the P600-million Passenger Personal Accident Insurance Program (PPAIP), which covers public land transport services.

At the same time, the LTFRB said it had chosen two insurance groups—Philippine Accident Managers Inc. or Pami and Special Alliance Management Inc. or Sami—to implement the program.

Pami, which includes the Passenger Accident Insurance Consortium 2 (PAIC2), is led by UCPB General Insurance Co. Inc. while Sami, which counts the Traffic Accident Consortium (Trapic) and the Equal Sharing Group (ESG) as members, is led by Stronghold Insurance Co. Inc.

Under the revised PPAIP guidelines approved by the LTFRB last March 4, Pami will handle all public utility vehicles (PUVs) with plates having an even middle number while Sami will handle PUVs with odd middle numbers.

With the approval of the PPAIP implementing guidelines and the appointment of the management groups, PUV passengers can now avail themselves of accident insurance courtesy of public transport operators.

"Passengers of PUVs can now be assured of the best insurance coverage with the adoption of the guidelines," said Sami president Cesar T. Apolinario.

All PUVs were directed to secure an "all risk-no-fault" passenger personal accident insurance. This means that when an accident occurs, the insurance company has to automatically indemnify the victims without the need to establish the cause of the accident or identify the party at fault.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 24, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.25	17.75	17	17.5	351,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	44	44	43	43	307,600
China Banking Corp.	670	670	670	670	7,780
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	38.5	38.5	38.5	38.5	20,000
Export and Ind. Bank Inc	0.57	0.57	0.54	0.56	320,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	24.25	24.25	24	24.25	215,300
Philippine National Bank	23	23.25	23	23.25	10,500
Phil. Savings Bank	27	27	27	27	10,000
Security Bank Corp.	17	17	16.5	16.5	514,800
Union Bank of the Phil.	25	25	25	25	14,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1	1	1	1	50,000
First Abacus Financial	0.52	0.69	0.51	0.69	110,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1955	1955	1950	1950	2,030
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1420	1430	1420	1430	660
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	22	22	19.25	19.5	46,200
Diversified Fin. Network	2	2	2	2	5,000
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	860,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	810	810	765	775	92,130
Ipeople Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	30,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	2,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.037	0.037	0.037	0.037	500,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	8,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.68	1.68	18,847,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	910	910	900	905	590,190
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.011	33,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	18	18	17	17.25	119,600
Manila Electric Co. B	27	27	26	26.5	1,192,900
Petron Corp.	2.75	2.75	2.65	2.65	6,238,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.24	1.24	1.22	1.22	199,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3	3	2.95	2.95	112,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Union Cement Corp.	1.48	1.48	1.48	1.48	110,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	7,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	4.05	4.05	4.05	4.05	4,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	1,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	16.25	16.25	16.25	16.25	755,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	60,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56	56	56	56	61,900
San Miguel Corp. B	69.5	69.5	69.5	69.5	36,600
Universal Robina Corp.	6	6.5	6	6.5	1,719,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	200,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	40,000
Ayala Corp.	6.1	6.1	6	6	3,479,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.021	0.022	0.021	0.022	1,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1	1	1	1	50,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	20,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.9	1,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.55	0.55	0.49	0.5	13,210,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	20.5	20.5	20	20	691,300
Ionics Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	40,000
J.G. Summit Holdings, Inc	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	227,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	2,000,000
Medco Holdings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	330,000
Megaworld Corp.	1	1	1	1	650,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	70,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.27	4,240,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	100,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	14	14	14	14	27,200
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	1,100,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	10,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Picop Resources Inc.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	200,000
Philippine Seven Corp.	4.45	4.45	4.45	4.45	2,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.48	0.5	0.47	0.5	1,700,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.2	0.25	0.2	0.25	100,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	21	21	19	19.25	759,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Q	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series R	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,800
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,300
PLDT 10% Pref Series Cc	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.2	5.2	5	5	2,946,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	20,000,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.205	0.205	2,140,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1	1	0.99	0.99	4,720,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.15	0.18	0.15	0.16	1,440,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.175	0.175	0.17	0.17	90,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	20,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	311,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.7	5.7	5.6	5.6	4,587,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	17,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	4,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.2	0.2	0.195	0.195	500,000
Omico Corp.	0.0026	0.0026	0.0026	0.0026	10,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	130,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.4	0.41	0.4	0.41	520,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	5,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	20,000,000

DISCLOSURES

FILINVEST Land Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 4 with record date on May 4.

* * *

EASYCALL Communications Philippines Inc. denied having any information that could explain the unusual movement in the trading of its shares.

* * *

PETRON Corp. disclosed that despite the total shutdown experienced by its Bataan Refinery last March 22 due to a power failure, its supply of petroleum products was not affected.

* * *

MABUHAY Vinyl Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 29, 3 p.m. at the Makati Sports Club. Stockholders of record as of March 30 are entitled to notice of and vote at the meeting.

* * *

DUE to a delay in the printing of its annual report, **Cebu Holdings Inc.** moved its annual stockholders' meeting to April 30, 10 a.m. at the Cebu Country Club.

* * *

CEBU Property Ventures and Development Corp. moved its annual stockholders' meeting to April 30, 3 p.m. at the Cebu Country Club due to the delay in the printing of its annual report.

* * *

BALABAC Resources and Holdings Co. Inc. denied having any information to explain the 50-percent increase in its share price to P0.225 from P0.15 per share.

* * *

PCI Leasing and Finance Inc. bought 184,125 of its own shares at P1.32 each.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL Container Terminal Services Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 30, 10 a.m. at the Grand Ballroom of Hotel Inter-Continental Manila, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of March 31 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research

AEV income hits P2.025B

ABOITIZ Equity Ventures Inc. (AEV) posted P2.025 billion in unaudited income in 2003 after payment of preferred dividends.

The amount represents P0.42 in earnings per share.

In 2002, AEV reported a net income of P2.205 billion, which included proceeds from Luzon Hydro Corp.'s business interruption claim of P236 million.

Taking this into consideration, AEV's 2003 earnings on a recurring basis increased by 3 percent from 2002's recurring income, giving the company a compounded annual growth rate of 22 percent.

AEV's power subsidiaries and associates posted the largest contribution to AEV's 2003 earnings, with a total combined contribution of P1.36 billion.

AEV's banking investments registered the highest growth. UnionBank and City Savings Bank turned in a combined contribution of P749 million, representing a 46-percent increase from the 2002 level.

The transport group's contribution to AEV's 2003 income increased by 17 percent to P256 million.

Pilmico Foods Corp. (PFC), AEV's food manufacturing subsidiary, contributed P173 million, or 28 percent lower than the year-ago level. Other AEV investments contributed P12 million.

AEV's cash balance as of Dec. 31, 2003 rose to P3.3 billion versus P2.3 billion in end-2002.

In 2003, for the second year in a row, AEV was voted the 2nd Best Small Cap company in the Philippines in Asiamoney's best-managed companies poll.

IMPROVED JAPAN OUTLOOK

Asian stocks up mildly; defies Wall Street fall

SINGAPORE—Asian share markets rose mildly on Wednesday, defying a fourth day of falls in US shares, while the yen inched up after Standard & Poor's raised its outlook on Japan's credit rating to stable from negative.

Japanese stocks firmed but gains were limited as security fears hit blue chips. Analysts said recent upbeat economic data and the S&P news encouraged some investors to step up buying in banks and realtors.

"I am concerned that if security fears keep weighing on US stocks, then that might also discourage foreigners from buying Japanese stocks," said Yoshihiko Kosuga, an equities general manager at Mizuho Investors Securities.

On Tuesday, Israel vowed to kill more top Palestinian militants after it assassinated Hamas' spiritual leader Ahmed Yassin on Monday.

Japan's Nikkei average rose 0.74 percent to 11,364.99, though key exporters Toyota Motor Co and Sony fell.

Taiwan blue chips, such as Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co (TSMC), rebounded strongly after two days of sharp losses.

Stock markets in South Korea and Australia were the only losers among major Asian indices. MSCI's index of regional stock markets outside Japan had risen 0.23 percent by 0610 GMT.

In London, investors expected a weak start to European trade, with bookmakers getting pre-market orders for a fall on London's FTSE of up to eight points, an 18 point slide on Frankfurt's DAX and a drop of nine points on the Cac-40 in Paris.

The dollar fell to 106.71 yen from 106.90 yen after S&P said Japan's nominal and real growth prospects were improving.

"Many expected the move sometime within this year, but the timing was earlier than thought and it was a surprise," said Mitsuru Sahara, vice president of forex dealing at UFJ Bank.

The yen hardly moved against the euro on the news, but eventually edged 29 ticks lower to 131.54 yen. The euro fell a bit more against the dollar to $1.2334.

Shares in TSMC jumped 5.45 percent after the company announced a share buyback, but broader support from state funds could only push the Taiwan market up by 0.66 percent.

The TAIEX plunged around 10 percent in two previous sessions following a disputed presidential election.

Financials were little changed on Wednesday, but the tech subindex rose 2 percent.

"Investors showed buying interest in companies that unveiled plans to buy back shares. But we don't know when the political pressure will be gone," said Albert Lin, vice president at Hotung Securities.

US stocks ended lower on Tuesday as worries about geopolitical events offset positive corporate developments to push all the major indices to new lows for 2004.

The technology-biased Nasdaq Composite Index fell 0.42 percent to 1,901.80. The Dow Jones industrial average closed a touch lower at 10,063.64.

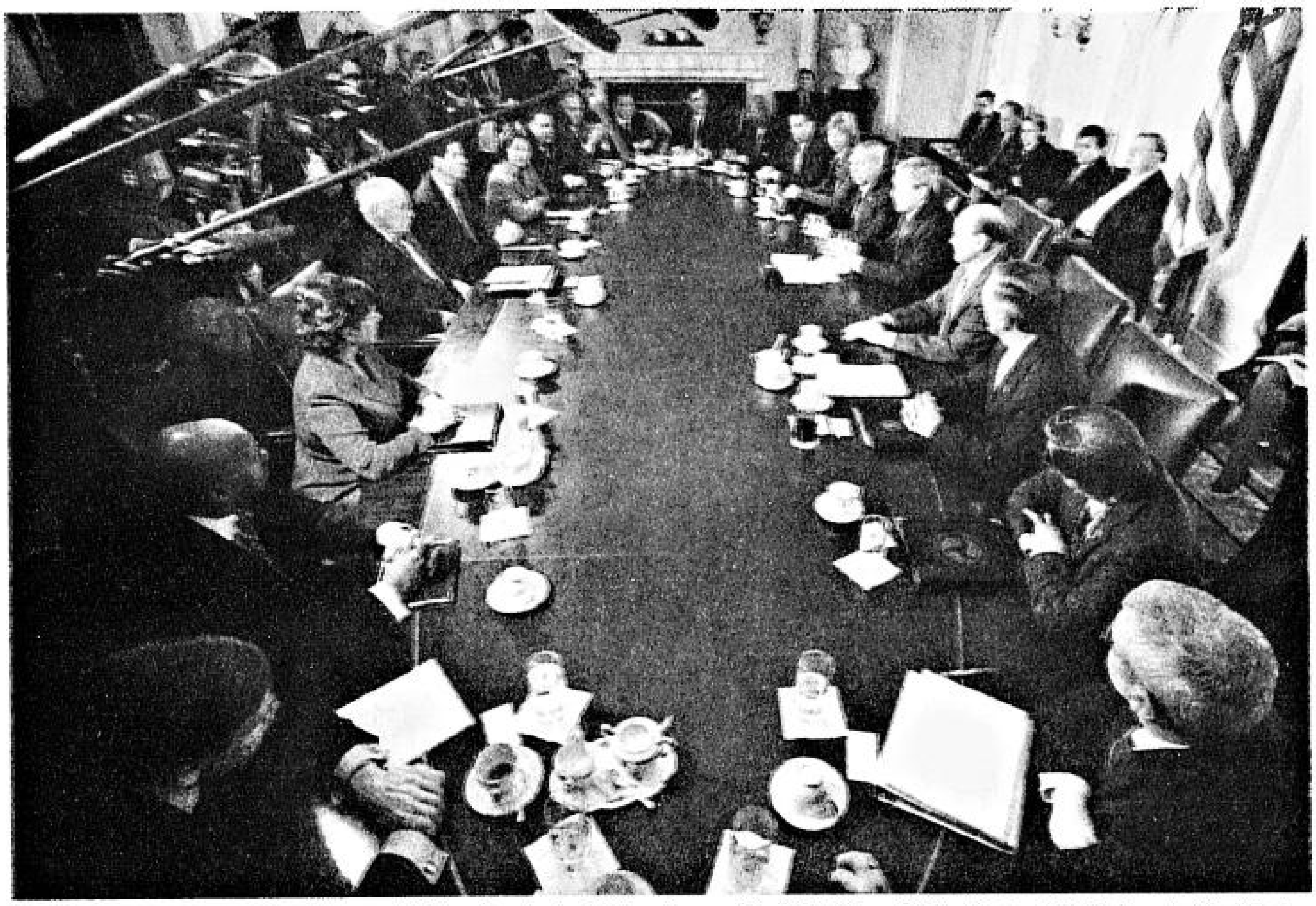
Gold was little changed but traders expected the yellow metal to fall after it breached the key $420 an ounce resistance in US trade.

Spot gold was quoted at $418.50 an ounce compared with $419.40 in New York on Tuesday when it rallied to $420.25 an ounce—its highest level since Jan. 14.

US light crude futures edged higher, extending the previous day's gain as concerns over violence in the Middle East raised supply fears.

But trading was relatively light as the market awaited US oil stock data, due out later on Wednesday.

US light crude for May delivery was trading 18 cents higher at $37.63 a barrel. *Reuters*



US PRESIDENT George W. Bush meets with his cabinet in the Cabinet Room of the White House in Washington, DC. Bush met with cabinet members to discuss the economy and the war on terrorism. AFP

IMF's Krueger urges passage of reforms

NEW YORK—Governments in both rich and developing nations should use the currently benign global outlook to tackle difficult economic reforms at home, the International Monetary Fund's acting chief Anne Krueger said on Tuesday.

Addressing the Economic Honors Society at New York University, Krueger said many parts of the world were enjoying more robust growth—with the US and Japan economies recovering and Asia expanding—now would be the opportunity to make tough structural and fiscal reforms.

She said a buoyant economy could cushion the pain for groups likely to be most hurt by the adjustments.

"Governments must overcome the temptation to sit back when the economic outlook brightens," Krueger said.

"Instead they should see—and seize—the opportunity to confront difficult issues and try to overcome what is often entrenched opposition to structural reform."

Tackling awkward structural reforms was not only a problem of the developing world, she said.

Problems in Japan's banking and corporate sectors, weak demand in many European economies and the growing fiscal deficit in the United States showed reluctance by policymakers everywhere to address problems, Krueger said.

But she said industrialized rich countries had more room to maneuver compared to emerging markets, where reform was often more urgent to raise growth and reduce poverty.

In many cases, reforms in emerging economies had been insufficiently ambitious, which often had a disappointing outcome, Krueger said.

There was also often a lack of following through on reforms to avoid politically-tough decisions, she added.

"It is hardly surprising that policymakers prefer to avoid politically difficult decisions and prefer to do the minimum necessary by way of unpopular reform. But this inevitably damages the prospects for success," Krueger said. *Reuters*

China sees sales increase

BEIJING—Chinese retail sales, which the government hopes will play a bigger role in driving economic growth, are expected to rise more than 9 percent this year, the Commerce Ministry said.

"Total retail sales are likely to break the five trillion yuan ($604 billion) mark in 2004, rising more than nine percent," the ministry said in a statement on its website www.mofcom.gov.cn.

Retail sales, a key measure of consumption in the world's most populous nation, rose an annual 9.1 percent last year, up from 8.8 percent in 2002.

Economists say consumption has contributed too small a proportion of China's gross domestic product growth.

The economy expanded by a robust 9.1 percent in 2003, driven largely by strong investment growth, and analysts reckon consumer spending has been held in check by a high savings rate spurred by worries over rising unemployment and higher costs for education and medical care.

Retail sales were 10.5 percent higher in the first two months of 2004. *Reuters*

EU ruling on Microsoft case could affect marketplace

SEATTLE —By the time Microsoft Corp. settled its antitrust case with the US Justice Department, the Internet browser war that precipitated it had already been fought—with Microsoft the victor.

In the ensuing years, technology has moved so fast— and the legal process so slowly by comparison—that the software behemoth similarly won other market battles before legal challenges could be resolved.

That may not be so with the European Commission's expected ruling against Microsoft on Wednesday.

The European Union's executive body was expected to fine Microsoft and order the company to offer a version of its flagship operating system in Europe that has been stripped of Windows Media Player.

And that gives European regulators a rare chance to influence Microsoft's current behavior, rather than trying to make amends for alleged wrongdoing against already sunken competitors.

Microsoft is just one of the companies battling over how people will hear and see music and videos online when a market now in its infancy matures.

"The EU decision comes when the media wars, if you could call it that, are ongoing," said Joe Wilcox, senior analyst with Jupiter Research.

About 34 percent of US Internet users played a song or watched video using Microsoft's Windows Media Player in February, according to Nielsen/Net Ratings.

That compares to about 20 percent who used rival RealNetworks' format, and about 9 percent who used Apple's Quick Time.

Other media players also are snagging smaller audiences, and some people likely used more than one player.

That wasn't the case in the browser battle between Microsoft's Internet Explorer and Netscape's Navigator. By the time the courts ruled that Microsoft abused its monopoly when it included its browser with Windows, Netscape was virtually vanquished.

Microsoft spokesperson Jim Desler said the company believed it was premature to speculate on any potential market impact.

If Microsoft were forced to ship a version of Windows without its media player, that could also mean it would have to start persuading users to download its player from the Internet —just like its competitors. *AP*

Asian ports must upgrade to meet needs of 'mega-container ships'

SINGAPORE—Asia must upgrade existing ports and build new ones to meet the needs of next generation "mega-container ships" as the center of gravity of global trade shifts from Europe to the region, analysts said at a maritime conference here Wednesday.

The rising share of China, India and Southeast Asia in world trade, increasing intra-regional transactions and a growing trend towards economic integration mean higher volumes of goods originating and passing through the region's ports and shipping lanes.

Jose Tongzon, an expert on maritime trade at the National University of Singapore, said China's share of global trade expanded from only 3.07 percent in 1990 to 11.20 percent in 2002.

The share of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) rose from 3.23 percent to 8.10 percent in the same period, while that of industrialized countries excluding Japan and the United States inched up at a slower clip from 11.29 percent to 14.24.

"The gravity of trade has shifted from Europe to Asia-Pacific," Tongzon said on the first day of the Asia Pacific Maritime summit.

For every three shipping containers bound for Europe from Asia, only two are coming the other way, resulting in a trade imbalance, he said.

China's rising role as a production base for exports, the growing economic integration of India and other developing Asian countries, and increasing trade within East Asia were cited as factors for the buoyant regional outlook.

Container throughput in China, including Hong Kong, soared 25 percent annually between 1998 and 2002, compared with 8.2 percent in Europe and 5.6 percent in North America.

Excluding Hong Kong, China's container volumes climbed 50.7 percent annually in the same period.

Singapore Transport Minister Yeo Cheow Tong told the conference Asia needs to build up its port infrastructure fast enough to meet the growth of maritime trade.

"In this regard, key Asian countries like China and India are already proceeding at breakneck speed," he said.

"India, for example, is embarking on ambitious development and expansion plans for its major ports, such as the Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Mumbai, and the Cochin Container Terminal on the southeastern coast."

China is also expanding its ports in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Dalian.

Yeo said Asian planners needed to consider the arrival of "mega" container ships with a capacity of more than 8,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), which currently make up almost 30 percent of the tonnage on order for delivery in 2006. *AFP*

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2	**50 FIRST DATES**	10.25, 12 40, 2.55, 5.10, 7:25, 9:40
3	**BUTTERFLY EFFECT**	11:55, 2.05, 4:15, 6 25, 8:35, 10:30
4	**HIGHWAYMEN**	12:20, 2:25, 4 30, 6 35, 8 40, 10:30
5	**SCOOBY DOO 2**	11:35, 1:40, 3:45, 5:50, 7:55, 10:00
6	**THE GRUDGE 2**	12:20, 2:25, 4:30, 6:35, 8:40, 10:30
7	**OTSO-OTSO**	10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50
8	**WISE GIRLS**	11:55, 2:05, 4:15, 6:25, 8:35, 10:30
9	**LOVE ACTUALLY**	10:40, 1:25, 4:10, 6 55, 9:40
10	**DEATH CURSE**	12:20, 2:25, 4:30, 6:35, 8:40, 10:30

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1	**SCOOBY DOO 2**	10:15, 12:10, 2:05, 4:00, 5:55, 7:50, 9:50
2	**THE GRUDGE 2**	11:15, 1:05, 2 55, 4 45, 6.35, 8 25, 10.00
3	**WISE GIRLS**	11:55, 2.00, 4 05, 6 10, 8 15, 10.00
4	**DEATH CURSE**	11:15, 1:05, 2 55, 4 45, 6 35, 8:25, 10 00
5	**OTSO-OTSO**	10.10, 12:35, 2:40, 4:55, 7:10, 9:40
6	**HIGHWAYMEN**	10:40, 12.40, 2:40, 4:40, 6:40, 8.35, 10 00
7	**50 FIRST DATES**	10:50, 1 00, 3.10, 5.20, 7.30, 9.50

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1	**HIGHWAYMEN**	10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00
2	**50 FIRST DATES**	11:50, 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10
3	**KARIBAL**	11:50, 1:40, 3 30, 5 20, 7:10, 9.00
4	**SCOOBY DOO 2**	11.20, 1:40, 4:00, 6.20, 8.40
5	**SCOOBY DOO 2**	10 50, 1:10, 3:30, 5 50, 8:10, 10:30
6	**THE GRUDGE 2**	10:40, 12:40, 2.40, 4.40, 6:40, 8:40
7	**BUTTERFLY EFFECT**	11.00, 1.00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00
8	**OTSO-OTSO**	11:00, 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00

Big R Supercenter NOVALICHES / FAIRVIEW

935-3229 / 31

1	**SCOOBY DOO 2**	11:25, 1:15, 3:05, 4:55, 6:45, 8:35
2	**OTSO-OTSO**	11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:30
3	**BUTTERFLY EFFECT**	12 00, 2.25, 4.50, 7:15, 9.00
4	**THE CURSE**	11:50, 1:45, 3.40, 5 35, 7.30, 9.00
5	**HIGHWAYMEN**	11 25, 1.15, 3.05, 4.55, 6.45, 8.35
6	**THE GRUDGE 2**	11 40, 1 45, 3 50, 5.55, 8.10
7	**50 FIRST DATES**	11:45, 1:55, 4 05, 6 15, 8 30
8	**THE NIGHTMARE**	11 00, 12 55, 2 50, 4 45, 6 40, 8:35

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2 OTSO-OTSO	2 OTSO-OTSO	2 OTSO-OTSO
3 SCOOBY DOO 2	3 KARIBAL	3 BONE SNATCHER
4 KARIBAL	4 50 FIRST DATES	4 LOVE ACTUALLY
		5 50 FIRST DATES

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1 CARMEN	1 OTSO-OTSO	1 LOVE ACTUALLY
2 OTSO-OTSO	2 LOVE ACTUALLY	2 LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
3 LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO	3 SCOOBY DOO 2	3 OTSO-OTSO
4 THE CURSE	4 THE GRUDGE 2	4 THE GRUDGE 2
5 SCOOBY DOO 2	5 CARMEN	5 SCOOBY DOO 2
		6 THX TORQUE

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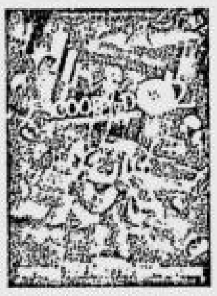
1 SCOOBY DOO 2	1 SCOOBY DOO 2	1 SCOOBY DOO 2
2 50 FIRST DATES	2 OTSO-OTSO	2 DUPLEX
3 KARIBAL	3 GOTHIKA	3 OTSO-OTSO
4 DEATH CURSE	4 LOST IN TRANSLATION	4 WATER DEMON
5 OTSO-OTSO	5 CARMEN	5 TOTALLY BLONDE
6 THE GRUDGE 2	6 DRAGON VS. NINJA	6 GOTHIKA



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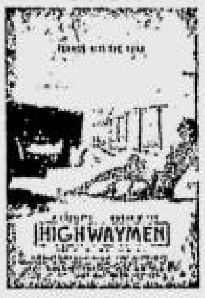

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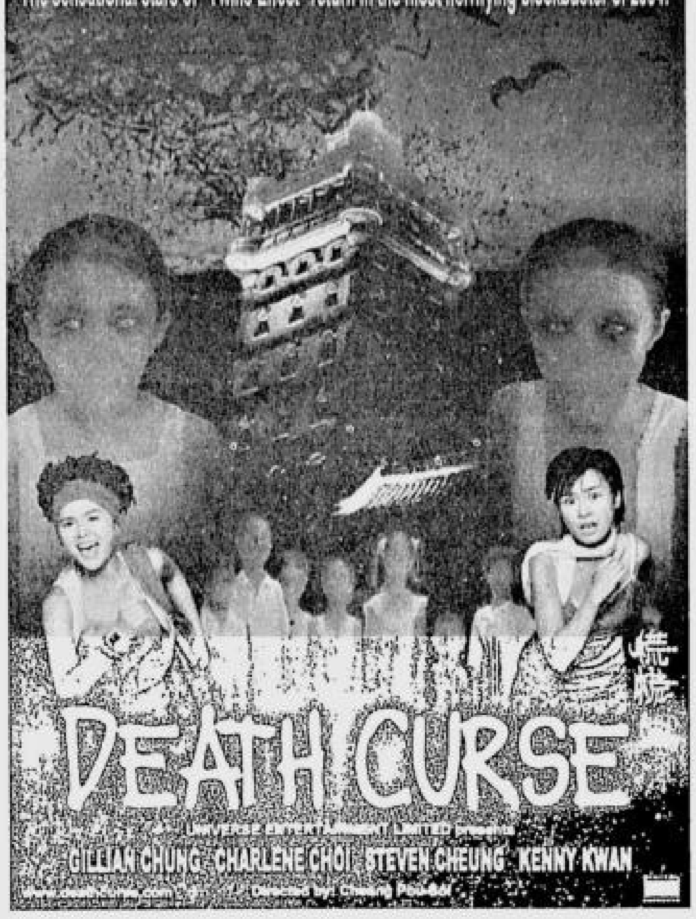
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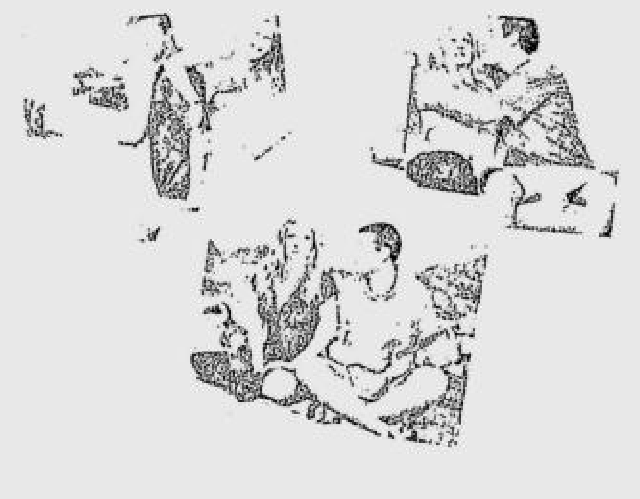

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DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

For inquiries, call:
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RESERVED SEATING

MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN	11:30, 1:40, 3:50, 6:00, 8:10, 10:20	GP
2	SCOOBY DOO 2	11:55, 2:25, 4:55, 7:25, 9:55	GP
3	50 FIRST DATES	11:35, 1:50, 4:05, 6:20, 8:35, 10:50	PG-13
4	HIGHWAYMEN	11:20, 1:20, 3:20, 5:20, 7:20, 9:20	R-13

POWER PLANT CINEMA

Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

WISE GIRLS R18 1:30, 3:30, 5.30, 7:30, 9:30	SCOOBY DOO 2 GP 1:20, 3:30 5:40, 7:50, 10:00	SCOOBY DOO 2 GP 12:45, 2 55, 5 05, 7:15, 9 25
HIGHWAYMEN R13 12:20, 2.20, 4:20, 6:20, 8 20, 10 20	LOVE ACTUALLY R18 1:25, 4 10, 6:55, 9:40	50 FIRST DATES PG13 12:15, 2 10, 4:15, 6:10, 8 15, 10.20

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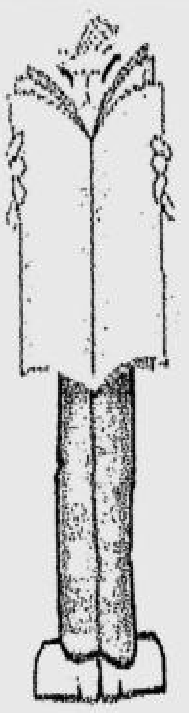

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ALI MALL CINEPLEX

Ali 3	HIGHWAYMEN
Ali 4	SCOOBY DOO 2
Ali 5	50 FIRST DATES
Ali 6	THE CURSE
Ali 7	OTSO OTSO

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MAR 27	CRAZY RIGHT NOW WITH VANESS WU
MAR 28	PBA: SHELL VS. GINEBRA
MAR 30	YAKAP DAY CARE CENTER MASS (9-11AM)
MAR 31	PBA: SAN MIGUEL VS. ALASKA
APR 2	ENRIQUE IGLESIAS -7 ASIA WORLD TOUR
APR 4	PBA: GINEBRA VS. TALK 'N' TEXT
APR 8	OLPH RETREAT (7AM)/ SHALOM (1PM)
APR 9	OLPH RETREAT (7AM)/ SHALOM (1PM)

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THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	KARIBAL
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	KARIBAL
B	LIBERATED
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	OTSO OTSO
CINEMA-2	KARIBAL
CINEMA-3	BUTTERFLY EFFECT
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	HIDALGO
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	CURSE
CINEMA-6	PEEP SHOW
CINEMA-7	TORQUE
CINEMA-8	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	SCOOBY DOO 2
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	HIGHWAYMEN
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	50 FIRST DATES
CINEMA-12	GRUDGE 2
CINEMA-14	GHOSTFIGHTER (RI)
CINEMA-15	OTSO OTSO

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PIÑAS)	TORQUE
CINEMA-1	OTSO OTSO
CINEMA-2	GOTHIKA
CINEMA-4	[illegible]

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PAHANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

SM CINEMA

SM Dial-A-Movie 833-9999

NOW SHOWING

Central

SM MEGAMALL
6331901

1	WISE GIRLS
2	BUTTERFLY EFFECT
3	SCOOBY DOO 2
4	50 FIRST DATES
5	HIDALGO
6	SORUM
7	THE GRUDGE 2
8	DEATH CURSE
9	OTSO-OTSO
10	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
11	HIGHWAYMEN
12	KARIBAL

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749

1	BUTTERFLY EFFECT
2	DEATH CURSE
3	TORQUE
4	HIGHWAYMEN
5	THE GRUDGE 2
6	HIDALGO
7	OTSO-OTSO
8	SCOOBY DOO 2
9	50 FIRST DATES
10	THE CURSE
11	GOTHIKA
12	KARIBAL

SM CITY MANILA
5239240

1	THE GRUDGE 2
2	BUTTERFLY EFFECT
3	WISE GIRLS
4	50 FIRST DATES
5	SCOOBY DOO 2
6	HIDALGO
7	KARIBAL
8	DEATH CURSE
9	OTSO-OTSO
10	TORQUE
11	HIGHWAYMEN
12	THE CURSE

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
9295452

1	KARIBAL
2	SCOOBY DOO 2
3	THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT
4	THE GRUDGE 2
5	OTSO-OTSO
6	HIDALGO
7	50 FIRST DATES
8	HIGHWAYMEN

SM CITY STA. MESA
7149522 • 7161416

1	OTSO-OTSO
2	THE GRUDGE 2
3	50 FIRST DATES
4	DUDA/DOUBT
5	HIGHWAYMEN
6	THE CURSE
7	SCOOBY DOO 2
8	HIDALGO
9	BUTTERFLY EFFECT
10	KARIBAL

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514302

1	SCOOBY DOO 2
2	HIGHWAYMEN
3	OTSO-OTSO
4	KARIBAL

North

SM CITY MARILAO
(044) 933 2013 to 17

1	HIDALGO
2	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
3	OTSO-OTSO
4	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

SM CITY PAMPANGA
7128015

1	SCOOBY DOO 2
2	TORQUE
3	LOVE ACTUALLY
4	LANGIT MO, KALIGAYAHAN KO
5	THE GRUDGE 2
6	OTSO-OTSO

SM CITY BAGUIO
(074) 4484505

1	HIDALGO
2	IN THE CUT
3	OTSO-OTSO
4	SCOOBY DOO 2

South

SM CITY LAS PIÑAS
8066888

1	RING: THE SPIRAL
2	SCOOBY DOO 2
3	DEATH CURSE
4	50 FIRST DATES
5	BUTTERFLY EFFECT
6	HIDALGO
7	OTSO-OTSO
8	HIGHWAYMEN
9	THE GRUDGE 2
10	KARIBAL

SM CITY BICUTAN
7763055

1	SCOOBY DOO 2
2	OTSO-OTSO
3	50 FIRST DATES
4	HIGHWAYMEN

SM SUPER CENTER SUCAT
8294975

1	HIGHWAYMEN
2	SCOOBY DOO 2
3	OTSO-OTSO
4	KARIBAL

SM CITY BACOOR
(046)4173868

1	DEATH CURSE
2	SCOOBY DOO 2
3	HIDALGO
4	THE GRUDGE 2
5	50 FIRST DATES
6	OTSO-OTSO
7	BUTTERFLY EFFECT
8	KARIBAL

SM CITY LUCENA
(042) 7108977-80

1	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
2	GOTHIKA
3	DRAGON VS. NINJA
4	OTSO-OTSO

Visayas & Mindanao

SM CITY CEBU
(032) 2313876

1	GOTHIKA
2	HIDALGO
3	SCOOBY DOO 2
4	NIGHTMARE
5	BONE SNATCHER
6	PEEPSHOW
7	OTSO-OTSO
8	TORQUE

SM CITY ILOILO
(033) 3209422

1	WATER DEMON
2	RESERVED
3	SCOOBY DOO 2
4	DUPLEX
5	GOTHIKA
6	OTSO-OTSO
7	RESERVED
8	TOTALLY BLONDE

SM CITY DAVAO
(082) 2976999

1	HIDALGO
2	WATER DEMON
3	OTSO-OTSO
4	GOTHIKA
5	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
6	SCOOBY DOO 2

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
(088) 8592254

1	WISHING STAIRS
2	OTSO-OTSO
3	GOTHIKA
4	TORQUE

THE PODIUM CINEMA

1
SCOOBY DOO 2
11:45 FS/12:15
MFS/2:20/4:25/6:30/8:35/
10:15 LFS/10:45
LMS/12:20 END

2
50 FIRST DATES
11:25 FS/11:55
MFS/2:05/4:15/6:25/8:35/
10:15 LFS/10:45
LMS/12:20 END

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1 HIGHWAYMEN	1 HIGHWAYMEN	ArtFilm 1 HIGHWAYMEN 11:45, 1:45, 3:45, 5:45, 7:45, 9:45	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 50 FIRST DATES 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00, 11:00	THX 1 SCOOBY DOO 2
2 SCOOBY DOO 2	2 WISEGIRLS	2 SCOOBY DOO 2 12:15, 2:15, 4:15, 6:15, 8:15	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 SCOOBY DOO 2 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15	2 HIGHWAYMEN
3 OTSO-OTSO	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 50 FIRST DATES 12:30, 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Onstage REPERTORY'S DRACULA Mar 26, 27 & 28	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 THE MISSING 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00, 11:30	3 50 FIRST DATES
4 50 FIRST DATES	4 THE MISSING		4 LOVE ACTUALLY 1:05, 3:30, 5:55, 8:20, 10:45	4 LOVE ACTUALLY
	5 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 HIGHWAYMEN 1:10, 3:10, 5:10, 7:10, 9:10, 11:10	5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
	6 SCOOBY DOO 2			
	7 THE GRUDGE 2			

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MOVIE GUIDE

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(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 (DTS)	BUTTERFLY EFFECTS
2 (SDDS)	SCOOBY DOO-2
3 (DTS)	SPIRAL
4 (GOLD DTS)	SCOOBY DOO-2
5 (GOLD DOLBY)	50 FIRST DATE
6 (GOLD SDDS)	HIDALGO
7 (GOLD DOLBY)	HIGHWAY MEN
8	OTSO OTSO
9	DEATH CURSE
10	GRUDGE-2

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72

1 (DOLBY)	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
2 (DOLBY)	SCOOBY DOO-2
3 (DOLBY)	50 FIRST DATE
4 (DOLBY)	HIGHWAY MEN

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 . 833.3274

1	OTSO OTSO
2	SCOOBY DOO-2
3	KARIBAL

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1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
3	OTSO OTSO
	SCOOBY DOO-2
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX)	KARIBAL
5	

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(Alabang) tel 850.4285

1	PEEP SHOW
2	KARIBAL
3	HIGHWAY MEN
4	OTSO OTSO
5	SCOOBY DOO-2
6	THE CURSE

M star
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(Las Pinas)
tel 873.5004

1	DRAGON VS' NINJA
2	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

PREMIERE CINEMA THX
(Makati City) tel 892.2503

	SCOOBY DOO-2

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1	OTSO OTSO
2	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376

1	KAMANDAG
2	BLOODY WISH
3	
4	

GOTESCO CINEMA

Gotesco City
(Manila) tel 734.8588

5	RESERVE
6	
7 (DTS)	
8 (SDDS)	
9 (DOLBY)	

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781

1	KARIBAL
2	OTSO OTSO
3	SCOOBY DOO-2
4 (SDDS)	SORUM
5	HIDALGO
6 (DOLBY)	BUTTERFLY EFFECTS
7 (DTS)	THE CURSE
8	U-BELT
9	PEEP SHOW

Gotesco Commonwealth
tel 951.0083

1	RESERVE
2 (SDDS)	
3 (DTS)	
4 (DOLBY)	
5	

Gotesco Ortigas
tel 656.6795

1	TORQUE
2	OTSO OTSO
3 (DTS)	MR NICE GUY
4	KARIBAL
5 (SDDS)	SCOOBY DOO-2

Universal
(Manila) tel 733.2470

1	RESERVE

Dilson
(Manila) tel 734.7724

Dilson	KARIBAL
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FAIRVIEW Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1	HIGHWAY MEN
2	OTSO OTSO
3	KARIBAL
4	SCOOBY DOO 2

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto SUPER CINERAMA
tel 733.4238

1 (DOLBY)	HIGHWAY MEN
2	SCOOBY DOO 2
3	KARIBAL
4	OTSO OTSO
5	RESERVE

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1	KARIBAL
2	SCOOBY DOO-2

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT Araneta Center

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1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
3	HIGHWAY MEN
4 (SDDS)	SCOOBY DOO-2
5 (DTS)	50 FIRST DATE
6	THE CURSE
7	OTSO OTSO

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY EX)	SKY OF LOVE
2	OTSO OTSO
3 (DTS EX)	SCOOBY DOO-2
4	HAUNTED OFFICE

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1	OTSO OTSO
2	DUPLEX
3 (DOLBY)	TORQUE
4 (DTS)	SCOOBY DOO-2

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1	OTSO OTSO
2	SPIRAL
3 (DOLBY)	GOTHIKA
4 (DTS)	TORQUE

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926

1	OTSO OTSO
2	BONE SNATCHER
3 (DTS)	SCOOBY DOO-2

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	OTSO OTSO
2 (DTS)	SCOOBY DOO-2
3 (DOLBY)	50 FIRST DATES
4	LOVE ACTUALLY

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1	OTSO OTSO
2 (DOLBY)	BONE SNACTHER
3 (DTS)	SCOOBY DOO-2
4	LOVE ACTUALLY

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
2	GOTHIKA
3 (DOLBY)	OTSO OTSO

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1	OTSO OTSO
2	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
3 (DOLBY)	GHOST HOUSE
4 (DTS)	TORQUE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795-3320

1	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2	OTSO OTSO
3	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS)	DOUBLE SEEDUCTION
2	SAKIM SA PAG-IBIG
3	PEEP SHOW
4 (DTS)	THE PHONE

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY)	I AM DINA
2	PEEP SHOW
3 (DTS)	SCOOBY DOO-2
4	SORUM
5	OTSO OTSO

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1	OTSO OTSO
2	SCOOBY DOO-2

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249.2558

1	SCOOBY DOO-2
2	OTSO OTSO
3	PEEP SHOW

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283

1	DUPLEX
2	GOTHIKA
3 (DTS)	TORQUE
4 (DOLBY)	OTSO OTSO

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel 520.8914

1 (DTS)	RESERVE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1	LANGIT KO KALIGAYAHAN KO
2	THE CURSE
3	SCOOBY DOO-2
4	OTSO OTSO

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1	LANGIT KO KALIGAYAHAN KO
2	OTSO OTSO

*Movies are subject to change without prior notice

ADVANCED SCREENING THX DOLBY dts SDDS

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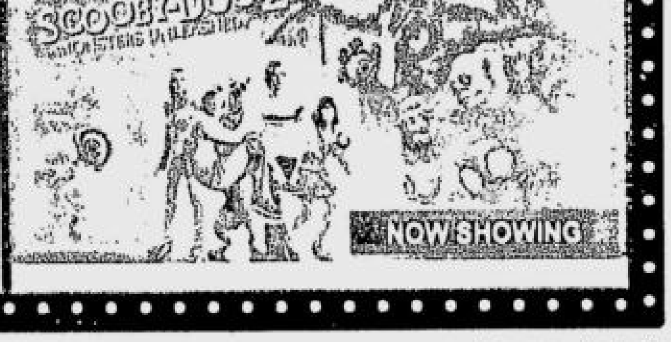

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6471240 4395075 09175312376

P381,000/unit condo 2Kms fr. SM Fairview 30 - 60M² Pag-ibig 8179650 / 9750 / 0919-2302120

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Owner/Developer
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ALEXANDRA 3BR 250m² IMPVD Unit P9M 6337601-03

QUEZON CITY

CUBAO 1.5M No Int. 9132224

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CONDO/TWNHSE

SAN JUAN

GHills Nr Unimart 3BRS P5.5M 671-4421 • 727-4840

MAKATI

MKT NR AYALA
BnewTwnhse/3stry/3br/2tb/grge P3.280M 8903461 loc 34

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★SUBIC 48has@200/m²
Direct Buyer Only 0920-9112910

MALABON

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QUEZON CITY

Cubao 261m² Com'l 671-4421

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ALSO AYALA HEIGHTS
MRS. GASTON 931-2938/48
AYALA LAND BROKER

RIZAL

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WANTED TO LEASE
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(2) Area: 4,000 - 20,000 sqm.
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fax: 525-15-24
tel: 536-42-77
email: rman@vasia.com

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MAKATI

Bful Magallanes 90T 8691937

PARANAQUE

Better Living 3BR 2TB Garage Tel 842-8847

QUEZON CITY

ACROPOLIS/GRNMEADOWS CORINTHIAN/VALLE 4-6BR P60-130T/mo 6337601-03

CONDO/TWNHSE

MAKATI

1-3 BR PACIFIC PLZ Fort Ayala Ritz others 7766802 8242933

SANLO DUPLEX 5268048/49

PASIG

ORTIGAS 2-3BR F-FURNISH P25-65T/mo T6337601-03

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MANILA

nr UST 7841746/6682108

QUEZON CITY

CUBAO P3.8 Std new 9124428

EDSA-Munoz 2BR2TB 9211050

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3. CHEMICAL TANKS
Bauan, Batangas
4. 3BR CONDO
Bay Gardens
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tel: 524 - 26 - 51 to 58
Office hours: 9:00-6:00

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AYALA AVE 8181696/7586

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LOAN & MORTGAGE

2% W/O TAKING CAR 3677523/24

OFFICE SPACE FOR RENT

MALATE MLA 526-8048/49

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

WANTED TO LEASE

TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

BMW

'03 BMW 520i 0917-7943168

TOYOTA

•'92 Lite Ace P175T neg orig paint 1st in-out 8060368•

'98 GLI A/T 0918-9420180

OTHER CAR BRANDS

Land Cruiser Pajero Surf Town-Hi Ace Delica Space Gear Elf Canter etc T-In OK 09178342020 / 9120647

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

CARS FOR RENT

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CAR VANS 410-0495

Cars Vans Altis 825-4058

★Vans Coaster Bus 422-9296

CARS/VANS/BRIDAL 8955627

L-300 749-9605

MB 7415897•09208328657

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1.5% CAR LOAN 6567685

1.5% CARLOAN 373-6519

1.5% CARLOAN 533-8254

1.5% Easy Carloan 7815352/55

1.5% Fast Car Loan 6560140

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3650974/75

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3732081-82

1.5% w/oTaking Car 7228942-43

•1HR Fast Car Loan 7125202•

2% w/o Taking Car 7262780

2% w/oTaking Car 7221021

1.5% 1HR CAR LOAN3743803

2% w/oTaking Car 8906630/33

2% w/oTaking Car 8870490/95

2% w/oTaking Car 8959454

BUSN DRS OFW 524-3197

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PETS

DOG TRAINER 0919-3419012

BILLIARDS

23T New Compt SR Impt'd 7767507

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

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PUBLIC NOTICES

ANNOUNCEMENT

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0916-5409520/0927-5352366

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is given that an extra-judicial settlement of the estate of the deceased **FELIPE G. GUTIERREZ** was executed by his heirs and acknowledged before Consul J. Eduardo Malaya of the Consulate General of the Philippines, S.F. CA USA on January 9, 2004. Per Service No. 0200, OR No. 0501, Doc. No. 0200, Book XXV, Page No. 0006, Series of 2004. (PDI-March 18, 25 & April 1, 2004)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late LEONORA BLANCO-FUENTES & ANDRES O. FUENTES, who died in Angono, Rizal on March 5, 1995 & January 1, 1990 respectively, has been extrajudicially settled by their heirs as per Doc. 404, Page 91, Book I, Series of 2004 of Notary Public Baltazar Abasolo of Rizal. (PDI-Mar. 25, Apr. 1, & 8 2004)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late FORTUNATO BARCELONA & MARIA AYSON-BARCELONA was extrajudicially settled among his her heirs as per Doc.436, Page.89, Book.48 Series of 2004 under Notary Public Evaristo B. Urbina of QC. (PDI- 3/18, 25 & 4/1, 2004)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late HONORIO L. CARLOS has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs as per Doc. No. 128, Page No. 27, Book No I, Series of 2004 by Notary Public Atty. Manuel N. Camacho of Manila
(PDI-March 18, 25 & April 1, 2004)

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is given of loss S2 ID No. 1321890 in the name of Dr. Nerio C. Zabala, lost last Feb. 24, 2004.
PDI - March 25, 2004

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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An international business consultancy firm is in need of the following personnel for immediate hiring:

INVESTIGATOR

- Candidate should have investigative skills and experience in the fields of business and politics.
- A degree in Bachelor of Laws or relevant post-graduate training would be an advantage.

RESEARCH-ANALYST

- At least College graduate and computer literate.
- Excellent writing skills required.
- Knowledgeable in Philippine politics and current events.

Send or fax applications to:

Unit-C, 15th Floor, Citibank Tower,
Valero corner Villar Streets, Makati City

or (02) 810-8120 not later than 31 March 2004.

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Agrarian Reform
Agrarian Reform Community Development Support Project
Italian Soft Loan Facility

INVITATION TO BID

The Government of the Philippines, through the Department of Agrarian Reform will implement the Agrarian Reform Community Development Support Project (ARCDSP), with funding assistance from the Government of Italy. The DAR intends to apply the Italian soft loan to cover the cost of a contract for the establishment of three (3) Farmer Support Centers (FSCs) in Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, and Sarangani. The total amount for the three sites is Euro 21,352,762.00 to be divided in the following way:

-civil works	Euro 5,158,104.00
-supplies	Euro 10,545,805.00
-services	Euro 5,648,853.00

The project involves the following:

1) Component FSC Physical Infrastructures --pertaining to civil works, goods and services to build and equip the three Farmer Support Centers, including technical assistance
2) Component Start-up Period Management and Training (3 years) – pertaining to technical assistance, training, and actual transfer of assets to the beneficiaries.
3) Components First Independent FSC Management Period (5 years) – pertaining to technical assistance and training after the completion of donor funded project.

The procurement of goods and services will be done through a contract that will be awarded to a consortium or association of Italian -Filipino companies according to the following criteria:

1.1 The provision of supplies and services, pertaining to the component "FSC Physical Infrastructures" that shall be of Italian origin, is restricted to Italian companies.
1.2 The provision of those goods and services, pertaining to the component "FSC Physical Infrastructures" which are more economically purchased in the Philippines or in other developing countries, especially in the South East Asia Region, is open to Italian and Filipino companies.
1.3 The provision of management and training services related to the Component "Start-up period Management and Training (3 years), as well as the provision of Management and Training services related to the Component "First Independent FSC Management period (5 years)" is open to Italian and Filipino companies.
1.4 The supplies and services provided for the items 1.2 and 1.3 amounting to 37% of the total Italian soft loan, may be purchased from the Republic of the Philippines or in other developing countries.

The Department of Agrarian Reform now invites eligible consortium or association of Italian Filipino companies to indicate their interest in providing the goods and services.

Interested consortium or association of companies must provide information indicating that they are qualified to provide the goods and services, such as legal basis or documents of the consortium, profile of the consortium and member companies (brochures, experience in similar projects, track record, experience in the areas to be covered by the ARCDSP, financial standing for the last 2 years, samples of relevant outputs, availability and profile of staff). The bids to be submitted by interested consortium should include three components: (1) civil works, (2) supplies, (3) services.

The consortium will be selected through competitive bidding, in accordance with the standards of the Manual of Instructions adopted by the European Commission on 10th November 1999.

Interested consortium may obtain further information from the Executive Director of Foreign Assisted Projects Office at the address below during office hours.

Expression of interest must be delivered to the address below by not later than March 31, 2004.

The Executive Director
Foreign Assisted Projects Office
Ground Floor, FAPSO Building, DAR Compound,
Elliptical Road, Diliman
Quezon City, Philippines
Telefax: (632) 927-07-52; Tel 426-74-55
E-mail: minnesj@dar.gov.ph

Short listed candidates shall submit their bids for works, goods and services not later than 9:00 am, May 17,2004

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

DIRECT SALE

JEWELRY NO CAPITAL CONSIGN TRMS MST B EMPLOYD 981-2865

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE

LETTER PRESS OPTR 7318073

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

FEMALE

Rush Good Maid NBI 4307061

SALES PROMO GIRLS
White to Fair Complexion FOR Beauty Products 7248781 7272890

MALE/FEMALE

Direct Hire Ofc Mrkting Staff 18/45yo coll level/grad w/w/o exp start asap 4390226 Racquel

Account Executive T461-3208

JOB HIRING 09167054572 AINA

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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Job Hiring 0920-3562010

•URGENT! OFC MKTG STAFF 18-50YO Coll Grad/Lvl w/ w/o expereince 439-0585 JELLY•

6-k wacky afternoon run

A 6-K FOOTRACE in costume dubbed as "FUN RUN @ THE BAY" launches off on March 27 covering the Freeport Central Business District Area in Subic Bay Freeport Zone.

A project of the LAUNCHPAD Games and Sports led by Japs Linzaga and Dan Zerrudo, the 6-kilometer race will start at the Alava Pier, Waterfront Road, Subic Bay Freeport Zone at exactly 3pm and back for the awarding ceremony at 7pm.

Linzaga explained that only participants in their chosen costume are eligible to win prizes in the fun run. Open for all ages and all levels will be treated equally.

Cash and gift certificates await the wacky race finishers and special prizes in kind will be awarded to the participants' best costume. Interested parties may contact Dan (0916-515-6354) and Avid (0916-202-4028).

The event will be assisted by the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA), UNA Radio Amateur Radio Group and the Philippine National Red Cross Olongapo.

Best IT Product Finalists

G8way and PC WORLD

unveil the most outstanding information technology products of 2003 in the 1st PC World Philippines Annual Awards

PC WORLD PHILIPPINES Annual Awards

CD-RW DRIVES

- Asus CRW-5224A
- CyberDrive CW099D
- Epraizer CW4802
- LG GCC-4480B
- LiteOn LTR-52246S

DIGITAL CAMERAS

- Kodak EasyShare DX6340
- Kodak EasyShare LS633
- Nikon Coolpix 3100
- Olympus Camedia C-150
- Sony Cybershot DSC-VI

GRAPHICS CARDS

- Gigabyte GV-R922128VH Radeon 9200
- Gigabyte Maya II Radeon 9700 Pro
- Inno3D GeForce FX 5900 Ultra
- Inno3D Tornado GeForce FX 5600 Ultra
- Inno3D Tornado GeForce FX 5800

HANDHELDS

- Asus MyPal A620U
- Fujitsu Pocket Loox 600
- Palm Tungsten C
- Palm Tungsten T3
- Xitrix Pocket PC

INKJET PRINTERS

- Epson Stylus C61
- Epson Stylus Photo 830
- HP Deskjet 5160
- HP Deskjet 5652
- HP PhotoSmart 7550

LASER PRINTERS

- Brother HL-1870N
- Epson AcuLaser C900 Color
- HP LaserJet 1300
- HP LaserJet 4300 DTN
- IBM Infoprint Color 1220

NOTEBOOKS

- Dell Latitude D600 (PP 05L)
- ECS Green 551
- Fujitsu Lifebook S6120
- IBM ThinkPad T40
- Neo Qnote ZWIL

SCANNERS

- Canon CanoScan LiDE 20
- Canon CanoScan 5000F
- Epson Perfection 2450 Photo
- HP ScanJet 2300c
- Microtek ScanMaker 3800

SOCKET A MOTHERBOARDS

- Asus A7N8X (Deluxe) Rev. 1.03
- Chaintech CT-7VJL (Apogee)
- Gigabyte GA-7VT600 Rev. 1.0
- MSI K7N2 (MS-6570) ver. 1
- RedFox M7NCD Pro ver. 1.1

SOCKET 478 MOTHERBOARDS

- ECS Photon PF1 Rev. 1.0
- Gigabyte GA-8KNXP P4 Titan Rev. 1.0
- Gigabyte GA-8S655FX Ultra Rev. 1.0
- Intel D875PBZ
- MSI 865PE Neo2

March 26, 2004 ■ Ballroom A & B, Dusit Hotel Nikko ■ 6:30 p.m.

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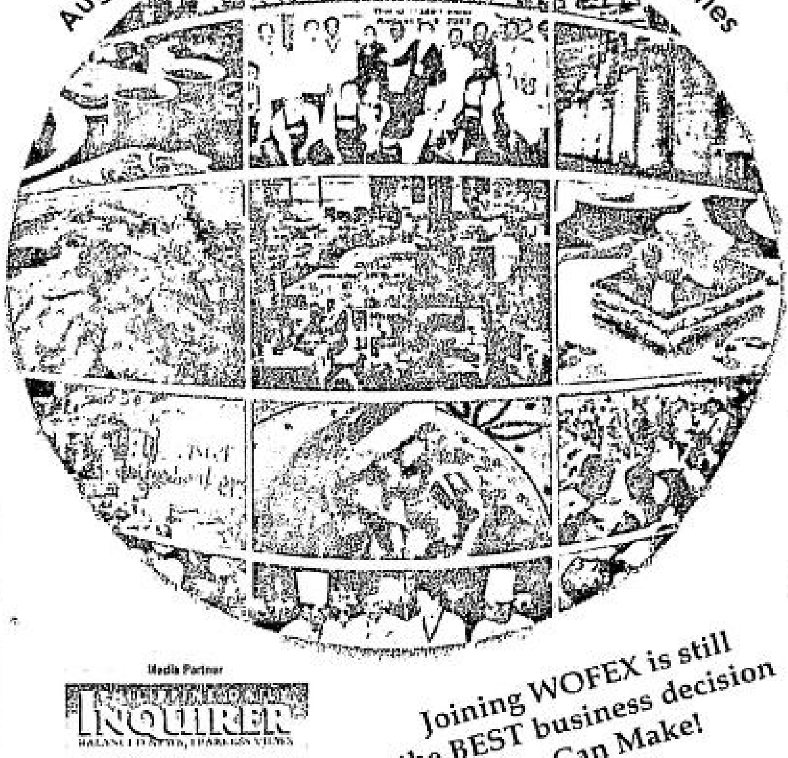

Co-Located Events

BAKER'S FAIR

Exhibition on Confectionaries, Ingredients, Bakery Products, Equipment, Supplies & Technologies

TASTE EXPO

A Series of Culinary Competitions and Demonstrations in Celebration of Culinary Artistry

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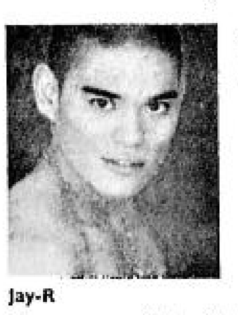
Jay-R unleashes talent in his 1st major concert … "Gameface"



Jay-R

AFTER the succesful launch of **Jay-R's** debut album, he is now ready to expand his musical horizon and soar to unparalleled heights before a live audience. This time, **Gameface… "The Concert"** will showcase his singing prowess coupled with his uncanny ability to prance onstage with the grace and élan of a seasoned danseur. Adding spice & glitter to the show are **Janno Gibbs, KC Montero, and R&B Siren Arnee** as well as surprise guest appearances of other top caliber artists in the local music scene.

Billed as Jay-R's **1st Major Concert, "Gameface"** traces his growth as a fledgling R&B artist and also showcases his major influences in a three-night musical journey at the Music Museum on **April 15, 16 & 17, 2004**. The audience will definitely be enchanted as **Jay-R** fuses the most popular tunes while maintaining a firm grip on today's biggest hits on radio. Vibrant music, youthful fun, and large doses of audience participation will highlight the performance. With **Mon Faustino** on the musical helm and seasoned director **Louie Ignacio** in charge – Gameface will definitely be a concert that would treat the audience to a stunning aural and visual experience.

Jay-R…Gameface is production of **Silverline Entertainment** and is made possible with the support of **Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Bench, Hotshots, Master Print Shop, Hot Momas Gourmet, Jam 88.3, Wave 89.1, Magic 89.9, 96.3 Lite WRock, 99.5 RT, 103.5 K-Lite, Meg Magazine, Philippine Daily Inquirer and GMA 7**. Tickets are available at all ***Ticketworld Outlets, Music Museum*** and selected ***National Bookstore*** branches. For inquiries and reservations please call 721-6726 or text 0918-9239845.

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PNB

PUBLIC BIDDING
TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.	Location	:	In front of MAKRO along Quirino Highway Barangay Talipapa, Quezon City
2.	Land Area	:	38,000 square meters, more or less
3.	Floor Price	:	P7,000.00 per square meter
4.	Turnover Condition	:	"As is – Where is"
5.	Development	:	Commercial Mall Development
6.	Floor Area	:	Development area shall have a minimum built-up Gross Floor Area (GFA) of 50,000 square meters, or equivalent Floor-Area Ratio (FAR) of 1.31
7.	Timetable	:	a) Construction shall commence within three (3) years upon receipt by the Winning Bidder of the Notice of Approval b) Commercial operation shall commence within five (5) years upon receipt by the Winning Bidder of the Notice of Approval
8.	Development Cost	:	Minimum appraised value of development for commercial mall shall be P800.00 Million
9.	Right-of-Way	:	a) Provision of a perpetual 20 meter Right-of-Way (ROW) (included in purchased area) for back portion of property b) Road construction and site development for ROW area shall be for the account of the Winning Bidder, to be completed within one (1) year upon receipt of Notice of Approval
10.	Taxes	:	PNB shall be responsible for the payment of the capital gains tax (if any) and creditable withholding tax up to the approved selling price only, and any excess shall be for the account of the Winning Bidder. All other expenses such as VAT (if any), documentary stamp tax, transfer tax, registration fees and other fees which is related in the transfer of title in the name of the Winning Bidder shall be for the exclusive account of the Winning Bidder
11.	Bid Evaluation/Award	:	a) PNB reserves the right to reject any or all bids at its sole discretion, waive any defect/s or informality on the bids received and accept the bid most advantageous to PNB, but does not guarantee that any award shall be made. b) PNB's decision is final and binding to the Winning Bidder. No withdrawal of bids shall be allowed once the winning bid has been selected and approved by PNB. Any withdrawal of bid by Winning Bidder shall result to forfeiture by PNB of deposit made. c) PNB reserves the right to withdraw the offered property at any time before the deadline of submission of offers for any purpose. d) PNB does not assume any obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify any bidder for any expense that may be incurred in the bidding process
12.	Submission Procedure	:	Submit **sealed offer** to buy accompanied by a no interest-bearing deposit of at least 10% of the offered purchase price in the form of Cashier's / Manager's Check payable to **PHILIPPINE NATIONAL BANK.** The sealed offer must be labeled **COMMERCIAL SALE.** Sealed offer and check payment for deposit must be submitted not later than **3:00 p.m., April 30, 2004** to : **Jonathan F. Caro** Senior Assistant Vice-President **Asset Management Group** 9th Floor, PNB Financial Center Pres. Diosdado Macapagal Blvd. Pasay City, Metro Manila All submitted bids shall be opened in view of the bidders immediately after the deadline on **April 30, 2004** at the office of Asset Management Group at the 9th Floor, PNB Financial Center.

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ABSORPTION CHILLERS - (3) CENTURY 2 Stage Steam Absorption Chillers Model AR-W1500G1, 1250 USRT (minimum), Input Steam @ 9 Bar, Cooling Water 32°C/37.4°C
MECHANICAL CHILLERS - (2) CENTURY Centrifugal Type Mechanical Chillers Model TR-G660C1, 600 USRT, Power Source 6.6KV/3 Phase 60Hz Cooling Water 32°C/37.4°C
BOILER - KANGWON 35,000 Kg/Hr @ 12 Bar Working Pressure 200°C Temperature, Two Drum Forced Draft, Dual Firing, Outdoor Type, Economizer & Forced Draft Fan
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WATER PIPING - Large Qty Underground Water Piping & Fittings; 1200m HDPE Piping 700mm dia. Fusion Machine; Large Qty of Carbon Steel Pipes ASTM & Fittings; (27) Horizontal Centrifugal Water Pumps; Large Qty Gate Valves
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Viewing is strictly by appointment
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For more details please contact Mr. Graham Ellis at 852 2910/11
E-mail: graham.ellis@henrybutcher.com

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MESSAGE OF THANKS

The Adamson University
Community
and the
Family of the late

Lillian A. Adamson

(wife of Alexander Athos Adamson, Adamson University Co-Founder)

wish to convey their heartfelt thanks to all those who joined them with kind thoughts in mourning her demise last March 4, 2004.
Masses in her memory will be held on the following dates:
1. March 29, 2004, Adamson University, OZ-AVR, 10 AM.
2. April 12, 2004, Sanctuario De San Antonio Church, Forbes Park, Makati City, 4 PM.

In Loving Memory

First Death Anniversary

AMB. LOUIS S. COSON

(March 12, 1949 – March 27, 2003)

Holy Masses for his eternal peace and happiness will be offered on March 27, 2004 at the following churches:

Epiphany of the Lord Parish *Novaliches, Caloocan City*	6:00 a.m.
Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe *Guadalupe, Makati City*	6:00 a.m.
Archbishop Palace Chapel *Villa San Miguel, Mandaluyong City*	6:15 a.m.
St. John Bosco Parish *Pasay Road, Makati City*	6:30 a.m.
Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene *Plaza Miranda, Quiapo, Manila*	9:00 a.m.
Sanctuario de San Antonio *McKinley Road, Makati City*	12:15 p.m.
Chapel of the Eucharistic Lord *Megamall Bldg. B., Mandaluyong City*	12:15 p.m.
Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament *Sta. Cruz, Manila*	1:00 p.m.
Shrine of Jesus, The Way, The Truth and The Life *Roxas Blvd., Bay City, Pasay City*	5:30 p.m.

His wife, **Tessie**; children **Jean Louis**, **Mara** and **Nicole** request relatives, friends and all those lives he touched to remember him in their prayers.

"My soul find rest to God alone from Him comes my salvation."
Psalms 62:2

IN LOVING MEMORY
on the
Fifth Death Anniversary
of

PATRICIA G. DEL ROSARIO

of Sta. Isabel, Malolos, Bulacan and Quezon City who joined her Creator on 25 March 1999.

HOLY MASSES will be offered today at the following churches:

5:30 AM	**Malolos Cathedral**, Malolos, Bulacan
6:00 AM	**Sta. Isabel Parish**, Sta. Isabel, Malolos, Bulacan
6:00 AM	**Barasoain Church**, Malolos, Bulacan
6:00 AM	**Holy Spirit Parish**, BF Homes, Quezon City
7:00 AM	**Mt. Carmel Shrine**, New Manila, Quezon City
8:00 AM	**Sto. Domingo Church**, Quezon Boulevard, Quezon City
12:00 Noon	**St. Joseph Shrine**, Aurora Blvd., Proj. 3, Quezon City
6:00 PM	**Christ the King Seminary**, Rodriguez Blvd., Quezon City
6:30 PM	**Our Lady of Miraculous Medal Church**, Proj. 4, Quezon City

Her loving spouse **Atty. CANDIDO**; their children **NAPOLEON & Myrna**, **Atty. Candido, Jr. & Tessie**; **Asst. Solgen Roman & Louttie**; **AMALIA**; **Jesus & Orpha**, **CANDIDO, III & Bernette**; **ANGELA & JOJO**; sisters and brothers-in-law; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

"Good men don't die. They go home."

Prof. Eustaquio O. Ordoño

of Balauan, La Union and Bacoor, Cavite

Faithful husband to **Amparo** (†)
Loving *"Tatay"* to **Lino & Carol**, **Caesar & Malou**, **Angel & Amy**, **Fe**, **Esple & Muller**; **Kalayaan** (†)
Playful *"Papu"* to **Abraham**, **Carlo**, **Kate**, **Noah**, **Ina**, **Kathlyn**, **Atreau** and **Esong**;

Ninong, *Uncle*, Mentor, Colleague, Friend.

Peacefully joined his Creator on March 23, 2004

His body lies in state at the Chapel of Charity, Don Bosco, Makati, and will be cremated on Saturday, March 27 at 11:00 a.m. Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque.

---

*"I am the Resurrection and the Life;
he who believes in Me will live even when he dies;
and no one who lives and believes in Me will ever die."*
JOHN 11:25-26

Our Dearly Beloved
INAY

Miguela "Megs" Custodio

*Joined her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in heaven
on 24 March 2004*

She is now with her husband **Germiniano** (†) and is survived by her son **Nestor**; daughters **Aida** and **Malen**; daughter-in-law **Marlyn**; sons-in-law **Delfin** and **Abet**; grandchildren **Genno**, **EJ**, **Aim** and **Mika**; cousin and loving companion **Ate Fe**; brothers **Ver**, **Celso**, **Bon** (†); sisters **Gene** and **Ome**, as well as nephews, nieces, cousins and other relatives.

Her remains lie in state at Arlington East, C. Raymundo Ave., cor. Mercedes Ave., Pasig City until Friday, March 26. On Saturday, March 27, her remains will be transferred to Nasugbu, Batangas.

Interment will be at Nasugbu Cemetery on Monday, March 29, 2004.

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Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

THIRTY-SIX kids gear up to learn motoring skills.

THE FIRST baby steps in motorsports

Aspiring racers go karting under the sun

By Tessa R. Salazar

START 'em young, and their first "baby steps" in motorsports should be in karting.

These aspiring racers are all in full racing gear: overalls, pads and helmets riding a 200-cc go-kart with a Dino chassis on a four-stroke engine tamed by hydraulic brakes and full electronic systems. You wouldn't exactly know these karters are 8- to 12-year-old kids until they remove their helmets and give you that toothy smile-signifying a high that can't be gotten from any video arcade.

Karting races

Considering all the physical pressures and the G-forces these go-karts exert on their frail bodies, the children don't seem to mind.

The parents seem to enjoy their children whiz about in the tracks, as well. Two proud daddies rubberneck at the sidelines of the Belgian-designed 750-meter Speedzone track, whooping as their kids go roaring by.

Meanwhile, Miguel Lazo, 10, and Migy Reyes and Ellice Acayan, both 8, run for their helmets and racing suits after a grueling classroom-setting lecture on kart racing in the morning.

Thirty-six children—with ages ranging from 8 to 12—joined the basic karting classes dubbed "Racers for Tomorrow" of the Tuason Racing School. And raced like there was no tomorrow, but with the discipline necessary to learn the so-called "racing lines." The prize for the top eight racers: KARTracing for two days for free at the Carmona circuit.

Roman Academia, Javey Benitez, Ton Joson, Rafael Benito, Kahlil Demaisip, Tomas Kabili, Nicolas Roxas Chua and Joaoi Pascual made it to the final eight.

Racers for Tomorrow would be followed by a summer karting camp—a four-day event open to 8 to 15-year-olds who will be taught how to become masters in go-karting. This will kick off in April and end with a go-kart competition.

Promoting motorsports

Tuason couple JP and Jeanette has a four-year-old kid named "At" they would want to see at the racing circuit someday. Looking at the bigger picture, they also intend to promote motorsports among young individuals. The basics of go-karting held on Feb. 28 was just the start of more lessons to come for the children this summer.

"The karting camp is for kids to understand everything about motorsports: how to handle a go-kart, how to race, the discipline of karting, such as determination, patience and team building," said Jeanette.

Jeanette said that in the process, kids are taught the skills while they have fun in a go-kart. More importantly, these children are taught the value of being calm on the track, which would eventually translate into their being better drivers on public streets when they grow up. They also become aware that speed, or too much of it when applied in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons, can be dangerous to themselves and to others.

"This event is for kids to enjoy go-karting and maybe think of it as a career path later on," she said.

The Tuasons, in fact, are attempting to address all age brackets in its various racing and driving education programs: from children's summer karting camp to circuit racing for aspiring adult racers at the C! Top Driver Challenge, to defensive driving for corporate yuppies.

Children who take an interest in motorsports can log in at www.tuasonracing.com for queries.

TIRED, but still managing a smile after a race JP and the racers of tomorrow

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Considering that the Durango is an SUV, a category which has not been known to handle turning that deftly, this beast breaks the convention

DECEPTIVE APPEARANCE

The uncommon look conceals a Magnum heart

By Tessa R. Salazar

THE LOOK of the Dodge Durango 4x2 is typical of a Chrysler SUV. The Philippine SUV market, however, hasn't seen many of these roaming around local streets and suburbs.

When there was an SUV boom in the country, distributor Norkis Automotive Resources had to have something to compete against other class-leading SUVs. It just happened that Durango was the one available, and so Norkis grabbed the first opportunity to bring it in.

The Durango was developed on the same platform as the Dakota pickup truck, thus the Durango is said to be one of the most truck-like SUVs in terms of appearance.

Durango rolled out from the assemblies of Chrysler, the maker of the legendary Chrysler Hemi hemispherical engine, which dominated the drag-racing scene in the United States for more than 30 years.

Valuable lesson

We drove a Durango 4x2 and learned a valuable lesson the moment we started the engine and stepped on the gas: never Dodge, rather, judge a book by its cover. The body size was deceptive, indeed, for beneath the hood was concealed a monster 4.7-liter Magnum V8 engine that generated 235 horsepower. That horsepower was smoothly transferred to the wheels via a multispeed automatic transmission. Really, at least in terms of cars, trust the Americans when you want power, and a "smooth" transition of that from your foot to the rubber.

The theater-style seats can also fit in a standard of 8 or up to 10 diminutive ones, depending on the passengers' butt sizes, of course. Alternatively, there are 88 cubic feet of free cargo space (with a 40/20/40 front split bench that would accommodate up to three passengers in front to make an 8-passenger seating possible). If you opt to keep the second row seat folded up, there's 51 cubic feet of cargo space and room for three passengers.

Dimensions

You would appreciate the 4.7-liter Magnum engine more when you learn the dimensions of the Durango body. It's lower, narrower and smaller than a Ford Expedition. The Durango is 1,790.69mm high, while the Expedition is 1,965mm and the Mitsubishi Pajero 1,855mm. The Durango is 4,914.89mm long, the Pajero 4,830mm and the Expedition 5,227mm. The Durango is 1,818.64mm wide, the Expedition 1,998mm and Pajero 1,895mm.

The ride is not "boaty" but comfortable enough. Still, when the road gets a bit harsh, you'd feel some of that harshness. The ride gives you a hint of the young market this SUV is really built for. The Durango may be a bit too firm of a ride for the older set, but the way it handles sharp curves is admirable, and is suited for more adventurous youngsters. It has a good grip on the road and a firm suspension for better handling when it takes on the curves. Considering that the Durango is an SUV, a category which has not been known to handle turning that deftly, this beast breaks the convention.

It is helped in this regard by the standard sway bar, which tends to prevent the vehicle from rolling and fishtailing.

Power features

A powerful engine requires powerful brakes as well. Thus, the Durango comes with four-wheel disc brakes. And the tires are all-season Good Year Wrangler (255/65R16) offering a more confident grip on the road.

For a relatively big car, its speed was breathtaking. The growl of the V8 certainly reminded us where all that speed, torque and power was coming from.

We noticed, though, that the air-conditioning system wasn't yet tuned to hot and humid climates such as the Philippines. Now that summer is here, Durango passengers will sometimes wish they could be able to turn the temperature knobs down a bit more. The system has, however, dual zone temperature controls. It has a separate temperature slide control for the front, and another for the back passengers.

Cockpit familiarization

The shift indicator on the dashboard is quite difficult to glimpse. It is horizontally placed on the dashboard, and we had to bend forward to look where our shifter was at. The only other alternative was to adjust the steering wheel itself.

We advise new owners to study their Durango cockpit controls first before driving it. The controls may be a bit confusing when you're driving and it suddenly starts to rain. Then you may find yourself fumbling for the light switches, wiper controls and defoggers as well as the dashboard illumination controls. Some of the gauges are color-coded to help you locate them in a glance.

The front bucket seats have a center floor console with three jumbo cupholders big enough for 32-ounce cups, a cell phone storage bin and power outlet.

Just above the rear-view mirror is a computer-controlled information console that tracks your trip, miles to empty your fuel tank, average fuel economy, direction of travel and inside and outside temperatures.

The premium audio system features 8 Infinity speakers. The 94.5-liter fuel tank has nylon fuel lines to help protect against corrosion and wear. The tank itself is situated securely ahead of the rear axle, between the frame rails.

Verdict: Just for looking different from your full-sized SUV, this midsized sport ute claims a kingdom all its own. And for concealing a V8 monster in a relatively dainty body, the Durango is a true "sleeper" among giants. If you don't mind gasoline prices going up again, and again, and again, go ahead and catch yourself a P2.050 million big fish that goes by the name of a Dodge Durango with standard leather seats, 8-inch TV monitor, DVD with backing sensor, dual airbags and side curtain airbags. This fish, by the way, will gulp in a liter every 6 to 8 km, regardless of its size.

THE DURANGO, in side view, is suited for more adventurous youngsters.

Best-selling Frontier Titanium 50th anniversary celebration offer

TO CELEBRATE its 50th year in the automotive industry, Universal Motors Corp. unleashes exciting news for the followers of its new Nissan Frontier "Titanium," a member of the popular breed of Frontier pickups, the country's undisputed No. 1 pickup truck for four straight years since 2000.

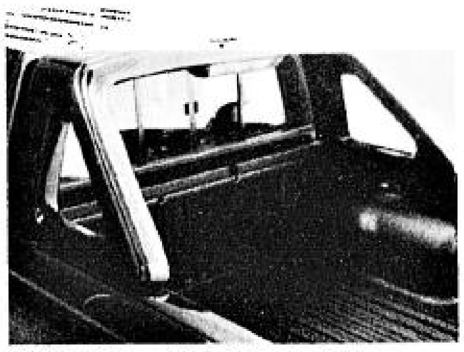
UMC, assembler and distributor of the best-selling Nissan Frontier pickup, announced its special 50th anniversary price for its latest variant—the Frontier "Titanium," which is available at P920,000 (standard retail price) for a limited time only.

This is Universal Motor's way of saying "thank you" to its loyal clients who have consistently supported and patronized the Nissan pickup through the years.

Double pleasure

On top of all the powerful amenities and world-class features that go with a recognized brand leader, the special anniversary price of the Frontier Titanium surely doubles the pleasure of owning this must-have model.

The much-admired Frontier has been the benchmark in its class, being the first pickup in the market to be equipped with automatic transmission and paired with a diesel engine, and the first to install a driver airbag as a safety standard, to name just a few.



FASHION bar with third brake light

Plus factors

Continuing the legacy of the Frontier is the "Titanium" which is packed with the conveniences of a 4x4 but with the affordability of a 4x2 pickup.

The Titanium carries that X-factor elusive in other 2WD pickups. Brawny on the outside and elegantly fashioned on the inside, this Frontier model exudes distinctive appeal hands down.

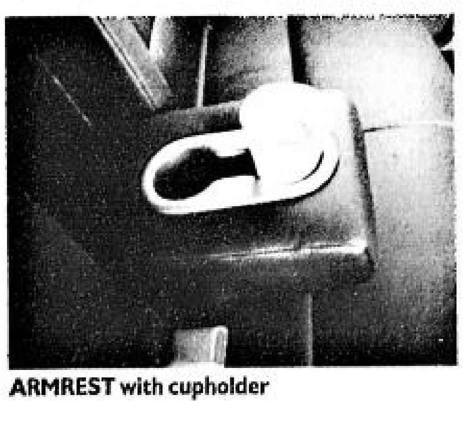
A rebel against mediocrity, the doors of the Frontier Titanium open up to a better view with its US-style scarlet-stitched leather seats, brushed aluminum panels, well-placed cubbyholes and an upgraded audio system. It is also fitted with SUV-inspired side mirror signal lamps, a fashion bar integrated with 3rd brake lamp (Nissan genuine accessory), and fog lamps integrated into the bumper to lend better visibility.

Rain sensor, etc.

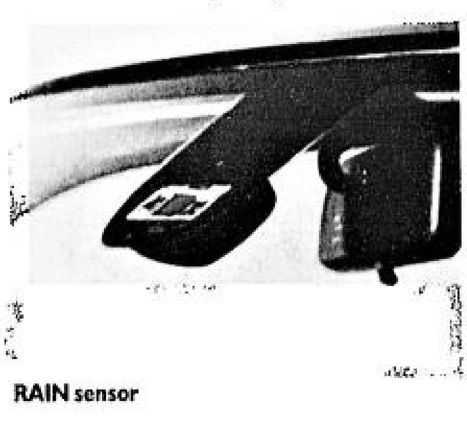
In addition to these "plus factors," this model comes with a rain sensor that activates with the slightest hint of a downpour, sprayed-on bedliner for "scratch-proof" cargo loading, chrome alloy wheels for a more aggressive stance and a uniquely designed side step board that bears the Frontier insignia.

Be it the tried and tested TD27 Diesel engine or the more QD32 Diesel engine, where the core of the Frontier's strength resides, the Titanium delivers the power you need for whatever type of driving situation or destination you have.

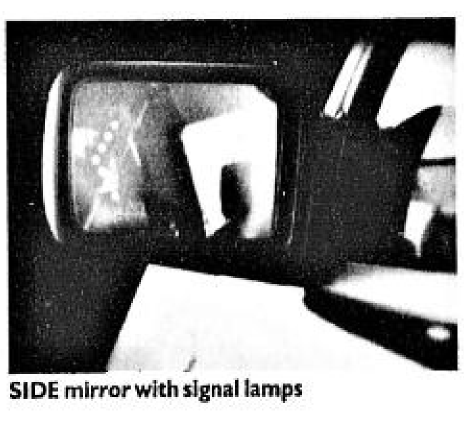
So can this Titanium really be to good to be true? Its leadership in the market says it all. The Nissan Frontier is still your only choice. Visit your nearest Nissan dealership now to get the Titanium at the special anniversary price for a limited number of stocks only.



ARMREST with cupholder



RAIN sensor



SIDE mirror with signal lamps

STILL A NAME WHEN IT COMES TO BODY KITS

For consistently dressing up winning designs in transport shows year after year without fail, Options Unlimited still remains the leading manufacturer of quality fiberglass auto body kits in the country. It recently introduced the latest hi-performance designs of spoilers, fenders, side skirts, front support, step boards, audio racks, headlight covers and strut bars all made of durable, imported-quality fiberglass that can be fitted to all types of cars and SUVs. Options Unlimited unveils yet another array of this year's latest winning designs for auto body kits. Options Unlimited showroom is located at 47-D-G Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Shell launches breakthrough formula gas for better mileage

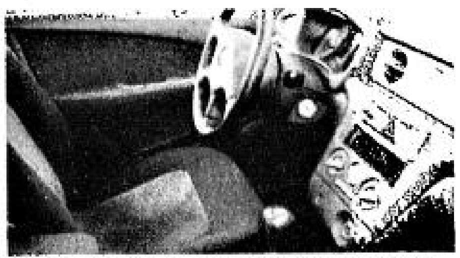
SHELL started offering on Monday reformulated gasoline with the "Better Mileage" formula in all Shell stations nationwide. The introduction of this gasoline formula is part of Shell's long standing commitment to provide customers with innovative fuel products that meets their needs for their everyday lives.

The first ever to be introduced in the country, the new Shell "Better Mileage" gasoline boasts of improved engine efficiency by addressing the needs of the fuel system such as minimizing deposits, improving combustion and reducing friction.

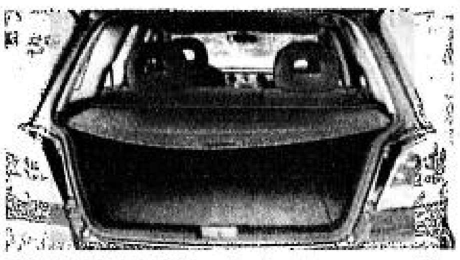
This unique approach to achieving efficiency allows motorists to go the distance with less fuel consumption. With reduced fuel consumption, the burden on an already strained daily budget is lessened, especially during these hard times.

The "Better Mileage" Formula is a result of exhaustive research and extensive field tests conducted at Shell's Laboratories in England, to ensure that the new product formulation meets the standards set to build up its better mileage benefit.

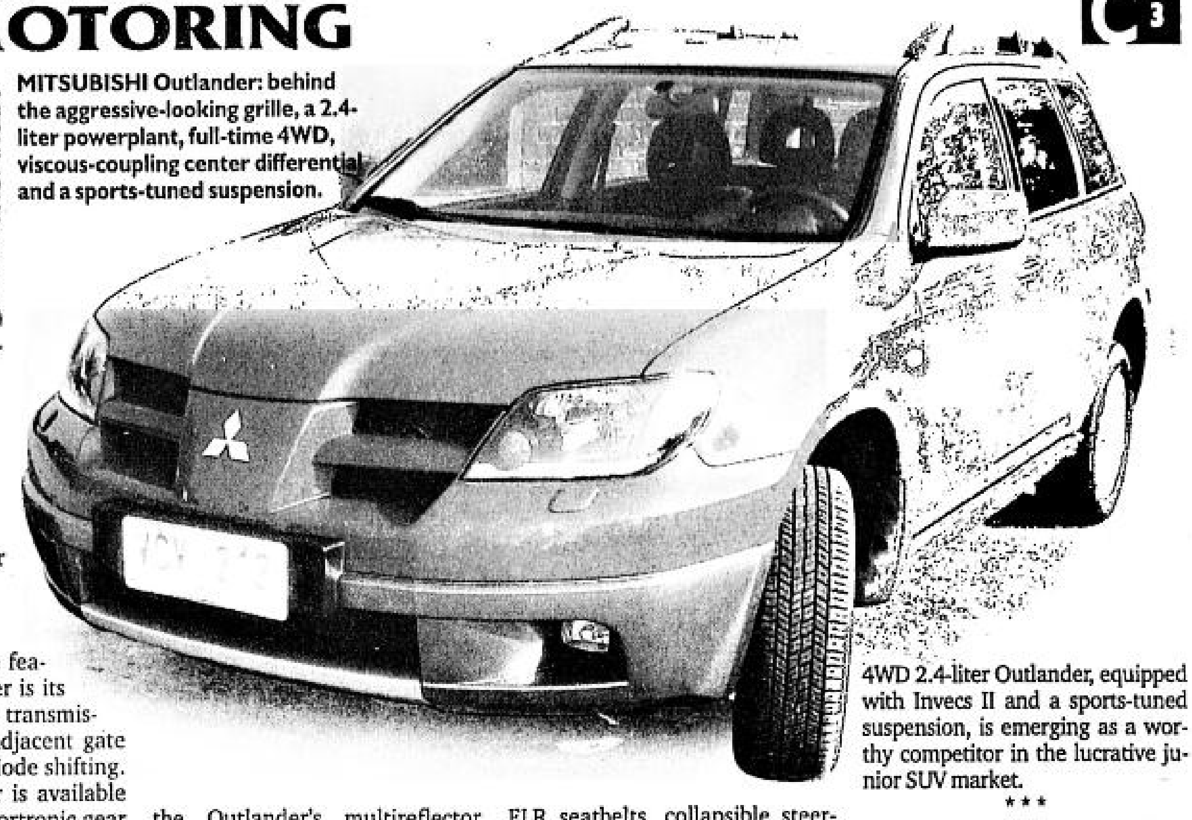
Proven to benefit vehicles of all types and ages including motorbikes and cars with fuel injection, catalytic converters or carbureted engines, the "Better Mileage" gasoline readily meets the growing demand for quality yet affordable fuel products that also offers more mileage.



INSIDE the Outlander: collapsible steering wheel, tall, well-bolstered bucket seats, silver-toned panels and most important, the Invecs-II automatic tranny with adjacent gate for manual Sports Mode shifting.



THE OUTLANDER at the back: a rear spoiler with third brake light, shapely clear-lens combination taillights, spacious cargo area with tonneau cover and an underfloor compartment.



MITSUBISHI Outlander: behind the aggressive-looking grille, a 2.4-liter powerplant, full-time 4WD, viscous-coupling center differential and a sports-tuned suspension.

The Mitsubishi Outlander

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

MITSUBISHI Motors Philippines Corp. ventured onto a crowded field when it introduced the Outlander last October. As a compact sport utility vehicle, the Outlander is competing with the Honda CR-V, Toyota RAV4, Ford Escape and Nissan X-Trail for market share—not to mention the Subaru Forester, Suzuki Grand Vitara and lately the Mazda Tribute. It may be an uphill battle for Mitsubishi, having entered the fray quite late in the day. Being the new kid on the block, the Lancer-based Outlander must offer something the others don't have.

For starters, the Outlander's full-time four-wheel-drive (4WD) system has a viscous-coupling center differential that transfers power to the rear axle when the front begins to slip in wet or low-traction driving conditions. The viscous coupling unit of the center differential, taken from the World Rally Championship (WRC)-bred Lancer Evolution, improves traction and grip where and when needed.

Sports-tuned suspension

For another, the Outlander is equipped with a sports-tuned suspension system that ensures nimble handling and steering accuracy. The Outlander's front McPherson struts and rear multilink suspension are strengthened by front and rear cross members attached to chassis cross members plus front and rear stabilizer bars fitted with ball joints. As a result, the Outlander exhibits minimal body lean as it rounds corners and the ride is stable and firmer. However, riding comfort remains smooth and carlike. The other compact SUV that immediately comes to mind when agility is mentioned is the RAV4, but then the RAV4 is lighter, shorter and has a smaller wheelbase than the Outlander. In fact, at 4,545 mm the Outlander is also longer than the CR-V and the Escape.

The extra length logically translates into a roomier passenger cabin and bigger cargo space even with rear seatbacks in place. There is plenty of head room and the bucket seats in front are tall, well-bolstered and comfortable. The rear bench-type seat, which can be split 60/40 or folded flat to carry long cargo, can easily accommodate three well-fed adults when the center armrest is folded. When you back up, your view is not blocked by the headrests since all the headrests are the see-through type. The cargo area has a retractable/removable tonneau cover and an underfloor compartment.

Invecs II

Another exclusive feature of the Outlander is its Invecs II automatic transmission (AT) with an adjacent gate for manual Sports Mode shifting. Since the Outlander is available with AT only, the Sportronic gear selector is a plus factor adding to the sporty handling and appeal of this vehicle. With Invecs II, the Outlander's 2.4-liter, 4-in-line, 16-valve SOHC gasoline engine performs smoothly.

The Outlander's engine produces 136 PS/5,000 rpm peak horsepower and max torque is 157 lb-ft/2,500 rpm. Although this output is adequate for keeping pace with other 4-cylinder SUVs in city driving, on the highway you may sometimes wish that Mitsubishi had brought in the 160 HP powerplant that 2004 model Outlanders in the United States have.

Aggressive look

When I was driving the Outlander, I noticed that other motorists tended to give way at intersections that had no traffic lights. Perhaps it was because of the Outlander's aggressive-looking grille, at the center of which the unmistakable Mitsubishi logo is embedded large and clear. Like its big brother the Pajero, the Outlander's multireflector headlamps are equipped with retractable washers to increase visibility during rainy weather or dirt-road driving. Foglamps installed in the front bumper are standard equipment, ditto tubular aluminum roof rails.

The Outlander's sporty yet elegant back is enhanced by a rear spoiler with third brake lamp. Unlike the vertical rear lamps of its major competitors, the Outlander's clear-lens combination taillights are shapely and semi-horizontally, gracefully ensconced. On the other hand, the Outlander's tires (215/60 R16) looked too small for such a sporty utility crossover, especially when the Outlander was parked beside my '97 RAV4, which is shod with 215/70 R16s. When it comes to safety features, however, the Outlander is fully loaded: dual airbags, front and rear 3-point ELR seatbelts, collapsible steering column, impact-sensing door unlock and 4-sensor, 3-channel ABS with EBD. The Outlander's brakes are very strong.

Summing up, at P1.27 million the longer, roomier, handsome 4WD 2.4-liter Outlander, equipped with Invecs II and a sports-tuned suspension, is emerging as a worthy competitor in the lucrative junior SUV market.

* * *

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* * *

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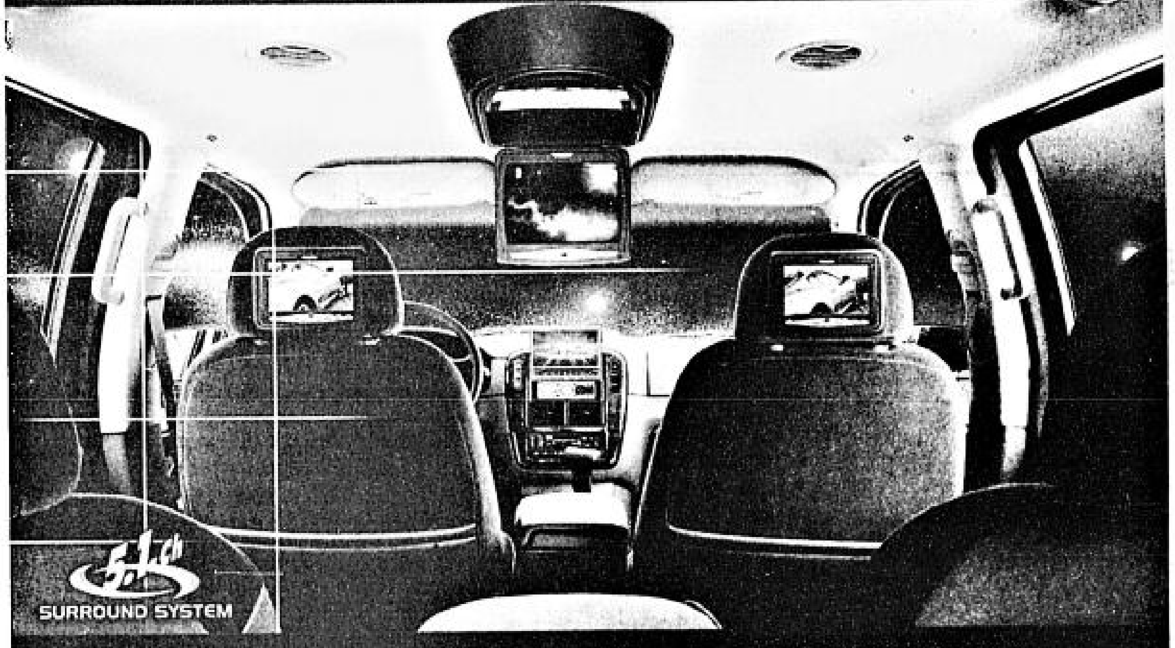

Dolby Pro Logic II
Clarion is the first to bring this innovation into the arena of car audio centre units. While Dolby Digital and dts require 5.1-channel encoded software in order to produce 5.1-channel surround sound, Dolby Pro Logic II can create a 5.1 -channel sound effect from any 2 -channel software. So even if your favourite DVD movie is only in stereo, no problem.
You can even enjoy stereo music CDs, MP3 audio and radio programmes with 5.1 -channel sound. What's more, Dolby Pro Logic II has a phantom mode that simulates the centre speaker so you can reproduce a quasi 5.1 -channel soundscape from the four standard speakers of a car audio system.

Dual Zone Entertainment
Not everybody likes to watch or listen to the same thing. So Clarion lets you divide your in-car entertainment into 2 discrete zones.
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New 6-disc DVD Changer
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"Buti na lang, Prestone ang brake fluid ko."

Nasa mabuti kang kamay.

Bigger size wheels not just for show

By Charles E. Buban

DO you want your vehicle to stand out among the crowd? You could spend millions of pesos on a sports car. Or you could turn your existing car into the talk of the town with the right set of after-market wheels.

Indeed, after-market wheels can be a necessity for some car owners who require only the highest standards of style and performance for their ride.

But with various wheel and tire packages to choose from, getting the proper combination to suit requirements (and to see what looks best) can be a tedious selection process.

"Here in the Philippines, one should be very careful in choosing the right set of wheels as this may affect car performance not to mention product quality itself," reminds Wheel Gallery Inc. president Sammy Liuson.

New wheels introduced

Wheel Gallery, one of the country's leading importers of big size after-market wheels and tires recently introduced new Bazo, MKW and MB Motoring wheel brands for SUVs and America's preferred aftermarket performance tire, the Nitto Extreme Performance NT555, Extreme Force NT-404 and Terra Grappler All Terrain.

"The introduction of MB Motoring to our wheel lineup, which includes Bazo, MKW, Diamo, Ace and Concept One, is our response to the growing demand for bigger size wheels," says Liuson.

According to Wheels Gallery, Concept One's 15-inch to 18-inch and Bazo's 20-inch to 24-inch top their list of most sought-after wheels and Liuson hopes that these new products would further strengthen the company's dominance of the country's aftermarket SUV segment.

WITH A SPECIALLY formulated compound and with one of the biggest contact patches available, the NT-555 provides superior traction, reliable handling and delivers total vehicle control.

Widely recognized

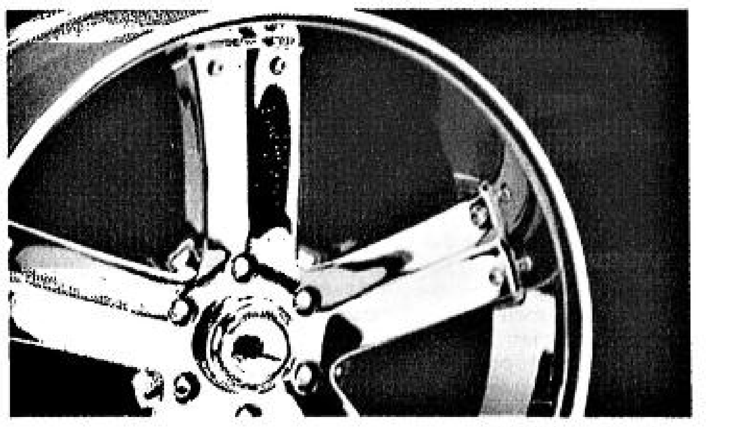
Nitto, on the other hand, is widely recognized in the US market and is the preferred choice of high-performance tuning firms and in fact, is endorsed by the National Import Racing Association.

"Nitto tires are rated among the highest for treadwear and designed to look and feel smooth on the road or in competition," describes Liuson.

Nitto tires' high-tread block rigidity and high grip rubber compound provides superior traction, stable contact and reliable handling for total vehicle control.

Wheel Gallery offers the Nitto performance tires for its big size 18" to 22" SUV wheels as well as 18" to 20" European Benz and BMW lineup.

Wheel Gallery, which can be found at Kartek Center, Santolan Road in Greenhills assures that a combination of lightweight tire and lightweight wheel can lead to the best vehicle dynamics, crucial when accelerating, braking or changing directions.



WITH SUPERIOR chrome-plating, cutting-edge styles and prices you can afford, Bazo wheels are a great choice for anyone looking to improve the look and value of their vehicle.

Miata Cup a novelty in Subic

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

TRAGEDIES in the high seas, tragedies on the road. What could be next?

I dread at the thought.

Those road accidents in Sariaya, Quezon, that killed at least nine people and another one in the Visayas that claimed more lives are grim reminders of how bad things are on our highways these days.

The most common reason listed for such highway accidents is the wanton overtaking by hellish drivers even on dangerous curves, not to mention *kuligligs* being among the main causes of deadly collisions in the highways going up North.

* * *

The one in Sariaya, Quezon, was almost a photo copy of previous accidents: Drivers racing like hell with nary a regard for life and limb.

That accident happened at dawn, which is almost the usual time that killer accidents happen there. It was surmised that the driver in the Sariaya incident could be drowsy when he tried to overtake the truck, resulting in a grievous miscalculation. The collision instantly killed the hapless passengers—many of them deep in sleep.

It's about time the government did something on these terrible accidents. How about more projects to widen our highways to begin with? And then next, install more traffic signs to warn drivers of dangerous curves? Also, more lights please? Our highways are often dimly-lit that even motorists traveling on a safe speed are sometimes victims of unwarranted accidents.

* * *

Honda Cars Philippines Inc. was recently awarded by the Consumers Union of the Philippines as an Outstanding Manufacturer of Compact Cars, under the product brand name Honda Civic, for the year 2003.

"Honda is proud to receive such honor," said Tin-Tin Reyes. "Again, we proved that our efforts to produce and maintain products of the highest quality will always reap rewards and it is for this that we always value customer satisfaction."

Honda was adjudged based mainly on the outstanding features/quality of the product and its beneficial effects to the consumers by the Annual National Consumers Award Board (Ancab).

According to CUP records, Honda was singled out through a series of screenings through FGD Survey analysis throughout the country as verified by the Ancab.

The Consumers Union of the Philippines represents the country's buying public. Through these awards, the consumers are able to distinguish the most beneficial products offered in the market.

"With this latest award given that we had won," said Tin-Tin, "Filipinos are assured that Honda gives them quality products that they deserve for a lifetime."

Here's a glass to that, Tin-Tin.

* * *

HSBC KUDOS. Nobody won the Mercedes-Benz Kompressor during the HSBC Invitational Golf on March 19 at Riviera. But still, the tournament went on fine, thanks to the able hosting as usual of HSBC top honcho Warner Manning. And of course it goes without saying that without Laine Santana, the tournament would not have achieved its desired success. Laine, of course, has always been the moving spirit behind the HSBC event, which regularly draws top executives and top media personalities in the country. Take a bow, Laine? But even as nobody won the Kompressor, one player made a hole-in-one on another hole. Warner, in consultation with Laine, gave the lucky guy (Benito Oblena) P50,000 in load for HSBC's Mabuhay Miles Visa Gold. I'll take that anytime. Cheers!

* * *

And now a word from Tonette Lee, whom I missed for quite some time.

She is now with Ford/Mazda and welcome back into your favorite playground, Tonette.

According to Tonette, the Miata Club of the Philippines will team up with Mazda Philippines to present the Miata Cup, a series of Miata-make races to be held on March 27 and 28 at the Subic International Raceway (Subic Freeport).

The 14-race series has awards at stake for three categories: "Overall Class Win Award"; "NA Class (all motor, naturally aspirated class)" and a novice class called "NA-Street Class" for new drivers.

"We are excited about the 2004 schedule with eight rounds scheduled for Subic and six rounds in Batangas. This provides the Yokohama Miata Cup drivers ample opportunity to showcase their skills on some of the finest racing circuits in the Philippines," said Romy Mercado, president of the Miata Club Philippines.

A healthy field of drivers is expected to start the 2004 Race Series. Pocholo Ramirez of Team "Trust Primiere-Bosch" and his teammates RG-David and Joselu Romero-Salas lead the field of expert and novice drivers. Jenny Tan, the lone lady entrant; everybody's favorite veteran Lambert Ablaza; last year's Yokohama Miata Cup Champion, Bubi Camus of Team "Camus Racing" and his teammate John Camus; Michel Aguilar and Lito Ignacio of Team "Polar Bear" in their race-prepared naturally aspirated Miata will insure a lively fender-to-fender race season.

Joey Pery in his "Turbo Miata" and race-veteran Joey Almeda in his 1800cc M2 Miata will not be able to make it to the start of the season, but both have promised to catch the balance of the year's events. As for Miguel Bichara, the 1st Miata Cup champion, difficulties in securing a sponsor has sidelined this excellent driver this season.

In the same breadth, the 2004 Yokohama Miata Cup series will run at both Subic with four rounds and three rounds at Batangas race venue. Drivers earning cumulative race points from each round of the tour will be declared series champion.

Joselu Romero-Salas, club race director said, "unlike previous years, this year the drivers will contest for three basic awards earning points cumulatively from each of the 14 rounds."

All year-end awards are conferred based on driver earned points accumulated on a round-per-round basis. Competitors in the 2004 Yokohama Miata Cup will have the option of dropping the points from two of their lowest scoring rounds from each tour venue for championship points.

Mazda Philippines' managing director Dave Macasadia expressed pleasure at being invited to participate in the series, saying, "We are thankful for the opportunity to be part of the Miata Cup. There is nothing more gratifying for a car manufacturer than to see owners enjoying their cars to enthusiast level, and creating activities that encourage safe, yet exhilarating driving experiences. Safety, exhilarating drive dynamics and enjoyment can come together, and Mazda has provided all these in our models throughout our long 80-year history. We advocate road safety, and so we're happy to see our Mazda Miata owners take their speed to the track, and off the streets."

For his part, Romy Mercado, club president, said, "I like the Miata because it brought back the '60s roadster with modern features. Thanks to Mazda for this great idea."

For more information on the 2004 Yokohama Miata Cup presented by 105.1 Crossover Radio and Mazda Philippines, visit: http://www.miataclub.ph.

Congratulations are also in order for my buddy, Ray Butch "Elvis" Gamboa, for his maiden golf tournament as founding president of the Society of Philippine Motoring Journalist on March 11 at Riviera.

The tournament had a very commendable mission: to raise funds for establishing a traffic education scheme in the country. I love that. Now there's a lead agency—from the private sector yet—to educate our motorists, specifically our eternally undisciplined bus, jeepney and taxi drivers (many of them, of course), on the proper handling of vehicles and the politically correct obedience to traffic signals and laws.

In the same vein, may I offer a toast to Danny "Sir John" Isla of Toyota Motor Philippines for topping the SPMJ Golf Championship as he spearheaded the Toyota team in bringing home the overall championship. Thank you Sir John for your victory because with your triumph, I won a bottle of wine. Make that red!

* * *

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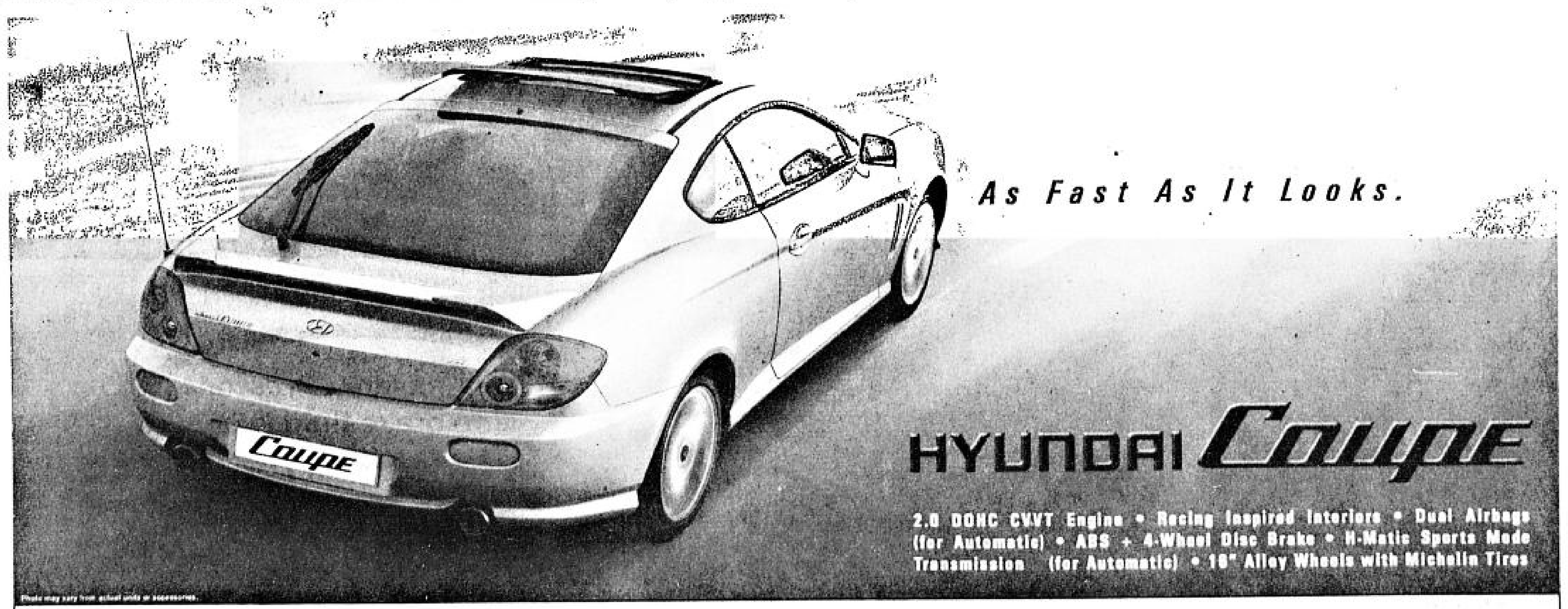

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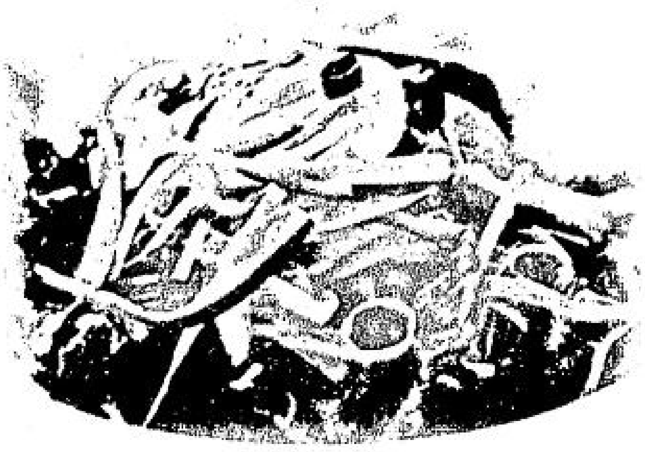
Not your usual 'pancit'



COULD I please have the recipe for *chap chae*? It would surely be a change from the usual *pancit*.

Here's my version. It's a bit overdressed, so feel free to adjust the ingredients.

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

Chap Chae

1 tbsp Korean soy sauce
1 tbsp sesame oil
1-2 tbsp sugar
¼ tsp grated ginger
½ tsp pepper
100 g pork loin, sukiyaki cut
100 g beef tenderloin, sukiyaki cut

Combine everything and let sit for a while.

½ pack Korean mung bean noodles (*chap chae*) soaked in water
2 tbsp peanut oil
2 tbsp sesame oil
1 c onion, chopped
2 tbsp garlic paste
1 carrot, medium, julienne
1 zucchini, medium, julienne
2 pcs dried Korean shiitake mushroom, soaked and sliced into strips
4 c fresh shiitake mushroom, sliced
2 tbsp + 4 tbsp sugar
¼ c Korean soy sauce
¼ c sake or rice wine
1 cup spinach, chopped
½ c nappa cabbage, shredded
Egg strips
Leeks, sliced green onion, chopped

In a wok, sauté onion and garlic in peanut oil and sesame oil. Sauté vegetables. Add sugar, soy sauce and meat mixture. Add noodles and sake. Correct seasoning by adding Kikkoman, sugar, salt and pepper if needed. Add spinach and cabbage. Top with egg strips, leeks and green onions.

Please let me know what I can use as a substitute for *quesong puti* here in the States.

LENI

Your best bet would be ricotta salata or a mild feta.

I'M very interested in making lady fingers because the ones I find in the stores are so small.

LILLIAN LOTA

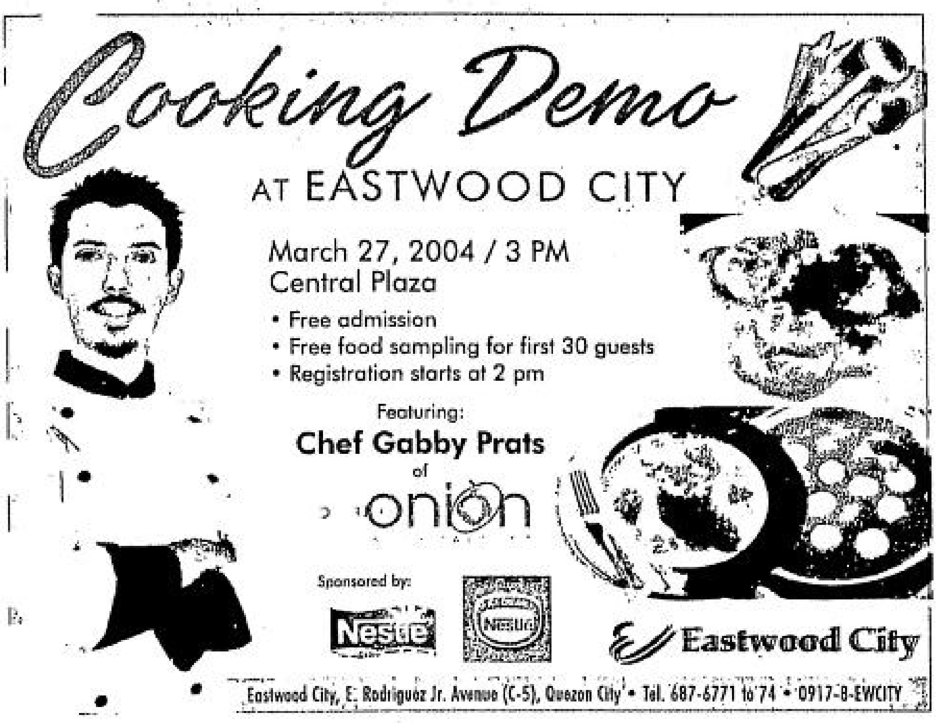
Funny but the local ones are way too huge compared to how big a lady finger actually should be, four inches long and one inch wide. In fact, they're called such because they're small, delicate and thin.

Well here's a recipe for you. When you do them though, as I can imagine the outcome, you may want to call them *lolo* fingers! Happy baking!

Lady Fingers

1/3 cup powdered sugar
5 egg whites
3 egg yolks
1 tsp vanilla
½ c flour + ¼ tsp salt (sifted together thrice)

LOCAL/D3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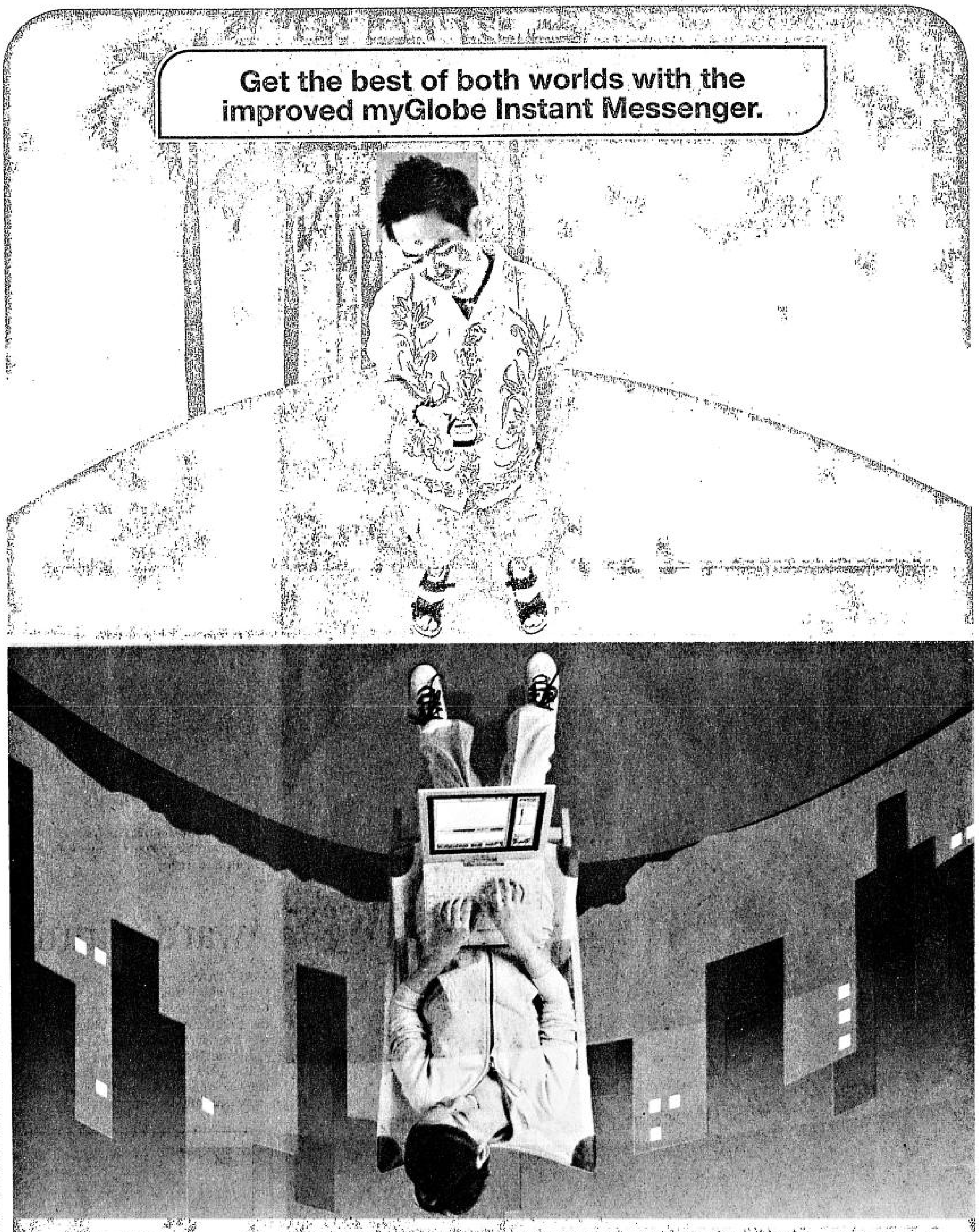
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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0611, Series of 2004.

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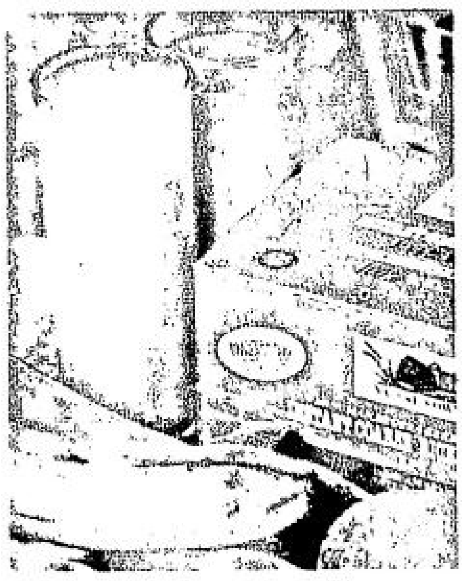
MARCH 25 THURSDAY

Energize with a shake



NATURE'S Own Instant Coarse Rice Beverage mixed with fruits makes for healthy shakes.

THIS summer, take a cool break with power shakes that give a blast of energy. Whether it's for breakfast, a post-exercise snack or dessert, refreshing fruit shakes will give your body the extra boost it needs.

Here are two shake recipes from chef Jackie Alleje that combine fresh milk and fruits with Nature's Own instant brown (coarse) rice beverage powder that contains vitamins, minerals and fiber.

Nature's Own Instant Coarse Rice Beverage is available at Shopwise, Landmark Supermart, Cash and Carry (PX R US), Bee Tin Grocery on Ongpin Street, Binondo Manila; Shopper's Mart, Inc., Ongpin Street; Eng Ho Bakeshop, 789 Banawe St., Quezon City; and D.E.C., Virra Mall, Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila.

Banana Milk Shake

1 medium *lakatan* or *latundan* banana, peeled and diced

1 c fresh milk

1 tsp muscovado sugar or 1 tbsp honey (to sweeten if necessary)

2 tsp Nature's Own (coarse) brown rice powder

Put all ingredients in blender, blend, and serve in shake glass.

Mango Milk Shake

1 medium mango, peeled and diced

2 c fresh milk

1 tsp muscovado sugar or 1 tbsp honey (to sweeten if necessary)

2 tsp Nature's Own (coarse) brown rice powder

Put all ingredients in blender, blend, serve in shake glass.

Drinks to cap a hard day

UNWIND after a long day at the office with exciting drinks concocted by Via Mare Oyster Bar and Café at Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center.

Try Sweet Kiss, a smoothie given a unique taste by European strawberry tea. The Café gives espresso coffee delightful twists like chocolate bits and cream, liqueur, fruits and ice cream.

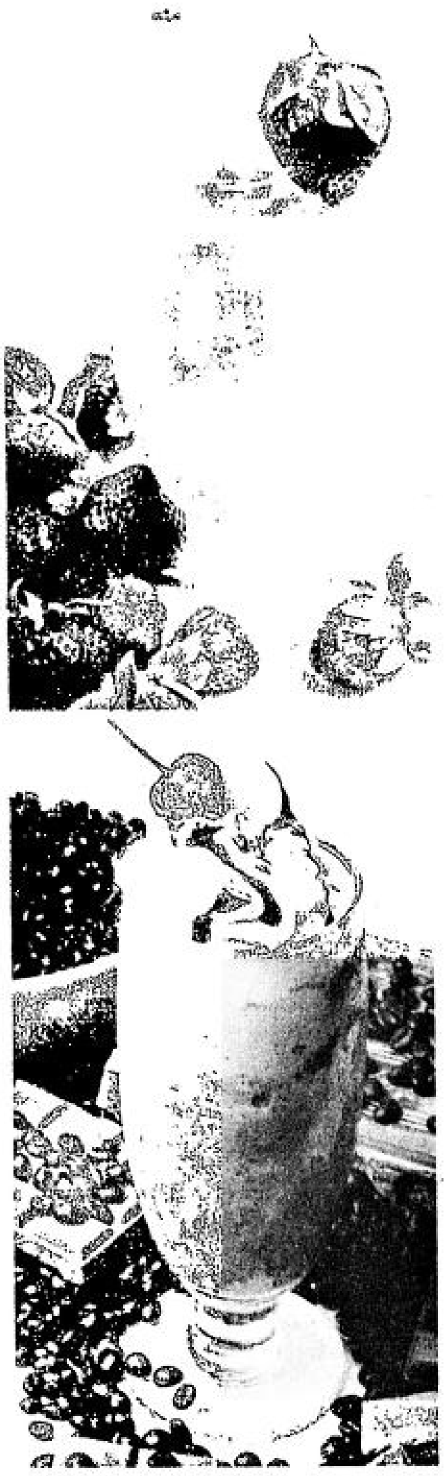
Choose from among the many cold coffee drinks of Via Mare Oyster Bar and Café. The drinks are also available for takeout along with the famous Via Mare Halo-Halo. Call 7574020.

CURRENTLY a hit at Café Astoria is Creamsicle Margarita, a fine blend of Tequila Gold, vanilla ice cream, orange juice, curaçao and a jig of *calamansi* juice. Creamsicle Margarita is available at the coffee shop in March and April. It comes with a cute, cuddly Teddy Bear.

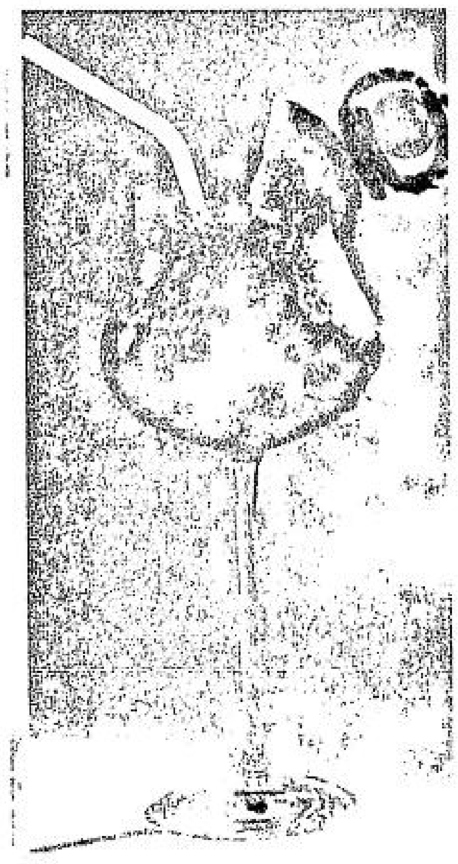
DON Roberto's Mango Wine is on the cover of the Finat International Magazine after winning the Gold Award and Best in Show Award in the Finat International Labeling Competition 2003 in Vienna, Austria. Entries were exhibited in the International Label Euro 2003 in Brussels, Belgium. Call (046) 4714046 or (046) 4713741, e-mail donrobertos@mangowine.com or visit www.mangowine.com.

HOLIDAY Inn Galleria Manila offers Fruit Fizz this month. It blends orange juice and cantaloupe extract enhanced with a jigger of Southern Comfort and a dash of grenadine syrup. It's served with melon slice and orange wheel garlands. Call 6337111.

PARADISE Mango Rum Liqueur by Destileria Limtuaco blends sweet sun-ripened mangoes and aged premium rum from molasses. Paradise is suitable for exotic drinks like Boracay Bliss, Summer Fling and Pinatubo Passion. It can also be drunk straight—either on the rocks or at room temperature. Paradise Mango Rum Liqueur won the "Trendiest Product in the Philippines" award at the Asian Ethnic Foodfest 2002.



VIA Mare's Sweet Kiss Strawberry and Coffee Float



MANGO
RUM LIQUEUR

HOLIDAY Inn's Fruit Fizz (top) and Paradise Mango Rum Liqueur by Destileria Limtuaco (right)

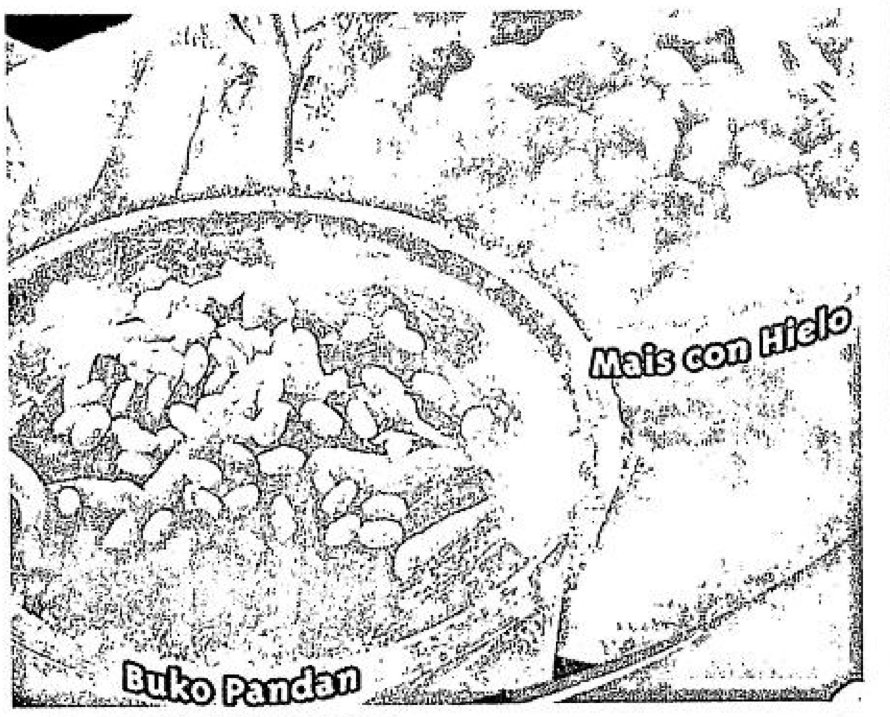
Award-winning wines

PRAHOVA Valley offers the 1999 Special Reserve Prahova Valley Pinot Noir, which got the Grand Medaille d'Or 2002 in Brussels, and the 1999 Reserve Prahova Valley Pinot Noir, which received the Gold Medal at the Mondial du Pinot Noir the same year.

The 1999 Special Reserve Prahova Valley Pinot Noir has the flavors of spice and leather combined with ripe berry fruit.

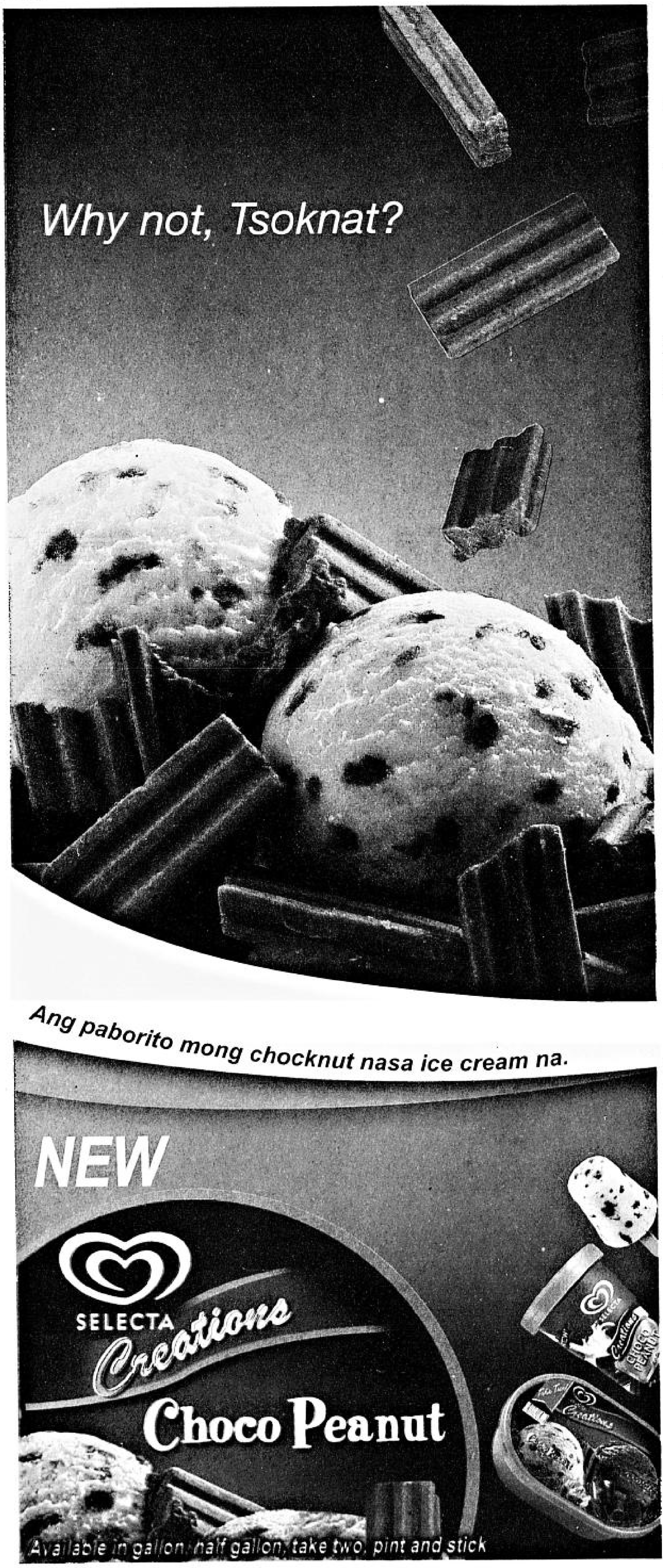
Prahova Valley wines are offered as table wines, aged in steel barrels; reserves and special reserves, which are aged in oak barrels. Three grape varieties: cabernet sauvignon, merlot and pinot noir are used in the three types.

Prahova Valley wines are available at Brumms Quality Wines, 5 Julieta Circle, Horseshoe Village, Quezon City. Call 7245211, 7222185 or 7246306.



DELIGHTFUL SUMMER TREAT

Jollibee introduces Ice Craze, an iced dessert that comes in two flavors: *buko pandan* and *mais con hielo*. This ice treat is topped with *buko* strips and *nata de coco* and has sweetened milk, coconut milk and *pandan* syrup. Or try it with sweet corn kernels, sweetened milk and corn flakes.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Government office distributes 'donation' envelopes

SPEAKING of corruption in government offices, bribery is still the standard operating procedure in most agencies if you want to speed up your transaction, like retrieving lost documents in record time. Bribery takes all forms and guises as related to us by reader R. Braganza (ramonbraganza@yahoo.com).

Somewhere in Pangasinan he found out that one had to give grease money to speed up the release of documents from a registry office. Lost certificates could also be easily reconstructed at the right price. That might not sound surprising but what he found unusual was the sight of someone distributing "donation" envelopes to people in the waiting area. He was told it was usual practice to pass envelops to raise funds for beauty contests or civic projects.

He found yet another form of fundraising in a government office at the National Capital Region. The employee in charge of the logbook demanded money for every transaction entered in the book. Braganza refused to give any money since no official receipt was issued, earning him the label *kuripot* from a security guard.

Braganza also warned taxpayers to check the receipts issued by cashiers. He wrote that, because he didn't, he only noticed when he got home that although he paid P100 for four documentary stamps, the cashier in a local tax office wrote only P60 on the receipt.

We forwarded a copy of Braganza's complaint to the concerned government agency.

DTI hotlines

At last, the Department of Trade and Industry has upgraded its consumer hotline and scrapped the old number, 8904932. Here are the new numbers:

Cellular phone: To text DTI, press #, text complaint, and send to 2920

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

Landline phone: Dial 8977 DTI or 896-5740

Internet: Visit www.i-reklamo.ph

E-mail: write to i-reklamo@dti.gov.ph

NSO helpline isn't helpful

When Gerry Plaza, section editor of Inq7, called the National Statistics Office (NSO) Helpline Plus 7371111 to get the birth certificate of his 2-year-old daughter, he was assured he would get it "within three to four working days." He was still waiting for the certificate one week later.

NSO's customer service operator had one explanation for the delay. "The more recent the year of birth, the harder it was to retrieve it since it was not computerized, and hence was processed manually."

Plaza said, "When Pilipinas Teleserv opened the NSO Helpline Plus, I was ecstatic that this would ease the burden of people braving the long lines at NSO to get their documents." He hoped readers would take note of his experience and take with a grain of salt NSO Helpline's claims it provided prompt service.

Credit card debt

Cris T. is in deep trouble like some credit card holders who have written to us about unpaid bills. She complained that the collection agency called her up every day to remind her about her debt. The biggest shock of her life, however, was when she found out that the original balance of P33,000 had now skyrocketed to P75,000.

"I was paying the minimum amount (due), but these last few months I couldn't remit anything due to lack of money. Can I refuse the daily calls from the collection agency? What will happen if I cannot pay the credit card company?"

Too bad, Cris T., but you cannot refuse the call of the credit card collector. If the interest has doubled, it only means that the debt is more than a year old. Nonetheless, we consulted a credit card expert. His advice is for you to call the credit card company immediately and come clean with your current financial situation. Ask how you can come to a settlement. After all, card companies just want to be paid.

By the way, the credit card industry has a database of mishandled transactions, including a record of blacklisted names. This serves as a clearing center for credit card applications.

E-mail the author at mgiron@i-manila.com.ph or lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

The magic in fresh fruit juices

THERE'S a quick and easier way to get the nutrients you need without compromising your healthful diet.

Fruit Magic is a fresh fruit juice store chain that offers the natural nutrients of apples, strawberries, passion fruits, mangoes, bananas, pineapples, papaya, melons, guava, *buko* and carrots.

The company's chief executive officer, Dr. Alan Escalona, said what they offered was an easier, more delicious way to get the much-needed nutrients without the need to peel or remove seeds from fruits.

Fruit Magic products are available in Pure Nectar, Shakes and FruZion. Visit a Fruit Magic store at Landmark Foodcourt, Alabang Town Center Foodcourt, Robinsons Galleria Foodcourt, SM Megamall A Foodcourt, SM Megamall B Supermarket, Glorietta 4 Foodcourt, SM North Foodcourt, SM North Main Building, Shopwise Supermarket Alabang, Shopwise Libis, Rockwell Power Plant Cinema, Esteban Abada corner Rose Alvero, Katipunan, QC, Club Fun Glorietta 2 and, soon, Philam Tower, Makati.

Not your usual . . .

From page D1

Beat the egg whites until frothy, add powdered sugar and beat to stiff peaks. In a separate bowl, beat the yolks and vanilla extract. Fold in the flour and the egg white mixture in three batches.

Grease and line a cookie sheet. With a pastry bag, pipe out fingers. Sprinkle with powdered sugar and bake in pre-heated 350° F oven for 10 minutes.

***Paano po ba ang paggawa ng* whipped cream?**

ARIEL

Chill bowl and whisk. Use a small, deep bowl for beating cream. Beat rapidly, scraping the bowl occasionally. Do not overbeat. To make sweetened whipped cream, fold sifted confectioners' sugar to taste into whipped cream, after beating. One cup whipping cream makes two cups whipped cream.

Where can I find grenadine and orange liquor? I tried looking for them in groceries and wine stores to no avail.

HANA

Unless Shirley Temple (the drink) has lost her luster, grenadine, as far as I can remember, was available everywhere. Have you tried Ralph's, Rustan's or Unimart?

As for orange liquor, you might have a difficult time unless you know the brand you're looking for. Many products don't really say orange liquor in bold letters on the label. Try looking for Grand Marnier, Cointreau or Luxardo. My current favorite is Luxardo because it's cheaper and, even better, quality is not compromised.

Santi's Deli sells Luxardo, but keep in mind that Luxardo is a brand. The company makes other liquors, from Kirsch, Limoncello to Sambuca. Check out the label. It's a green square bottle with a red cap.

I wish to cook *poulet de province* and one ingredient is *herb de* Provence. Where can I buy it ?

Herbes de Provence is a combination of herbs commonly used in cooking in southern France. You can make it yourself. It is usually a mix of basil, fennel seed, lavender, marjoram, rosemary, sage, summer savory and thyme.

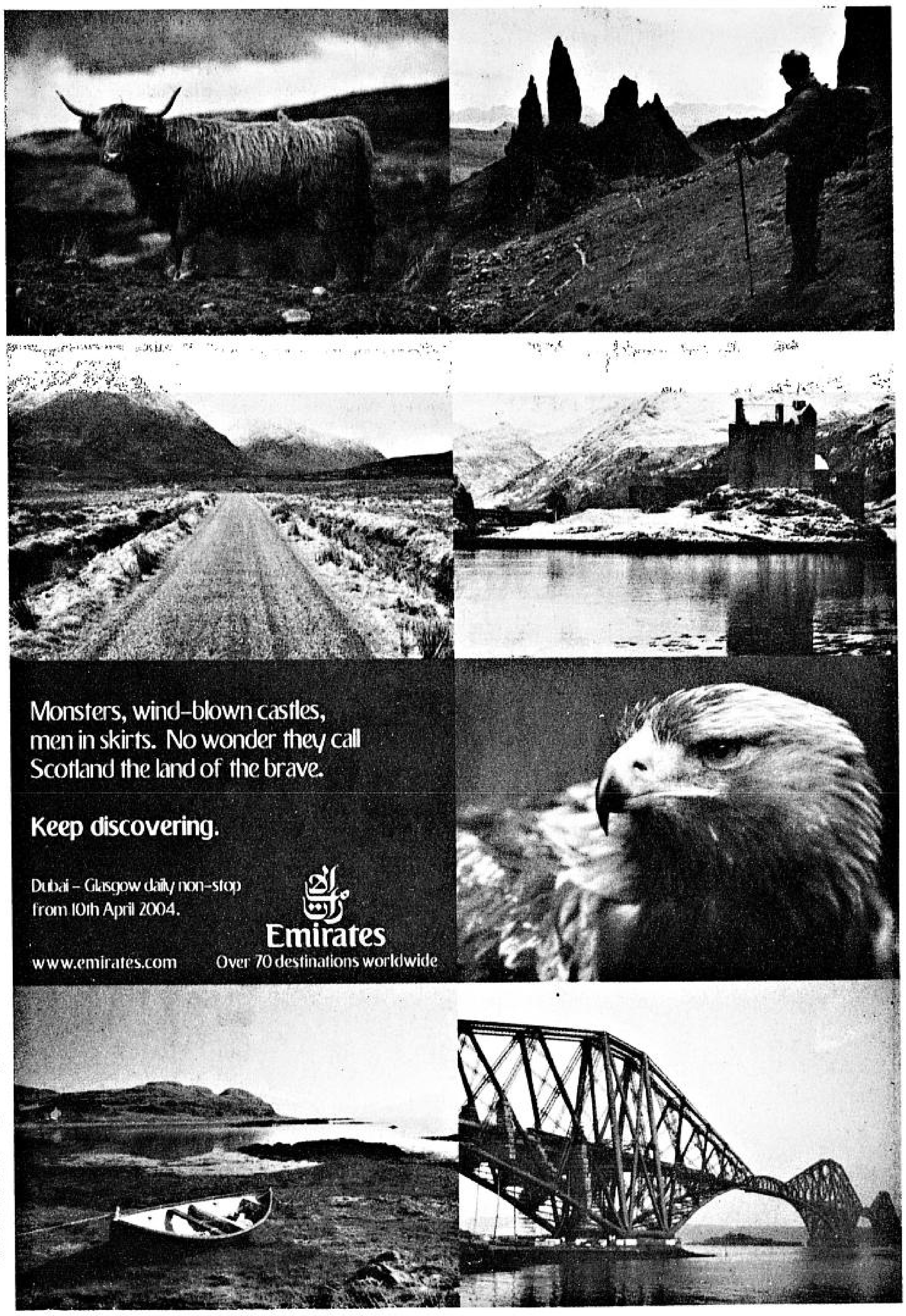
With much luck you can find the mixture in the herb section of large supermarkets, S&R store or in delis. I do agree it is quite an elusive commodity. I get mine in Santi's and the brand, Milerb, is a favorite of mine. You should try the brand's herbs, processed and preserved in oil so that their flavors are kept at their best far longer than the regular dried ones.

Where can I buy phyllo pastry used in baklava?

AILEEN ALVAREZ

Phyllo or filo literally means "thin as a leaf" and is considered a highly skilled form of pastry art in Greece. It is also widely used in Middle Eastern cooking. My source is Santi's. Haven't seen it anywhere else.

For questions and comments, text 0917-8399888.



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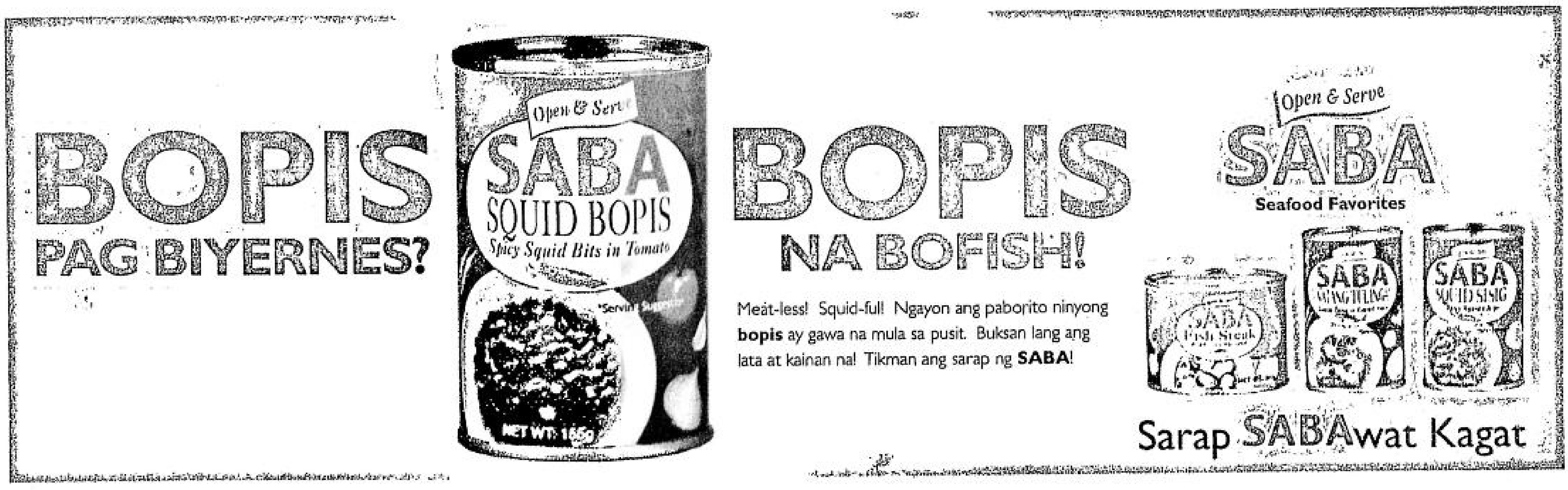


Meat-less! Squid-full! Ngayon ang paborito ninyong **bopis** ay gawa na mula sa pusit. Buksan lang ang lata at kainan na! Tikman ang sarap ng **SABA**!

Celebrate graduation at home

By Dorothy MJ Ferreria
Contributor

IT is graduation season and, given the tight budget that many of us have to work with, we would prefer to just prepare a special meal for our special graduate instead of eating out.

Here we have Cheese Chowder, Fruit-stuffed Chicken and Fried Banana Rolls a la Mode.

Congratulations to all graduates!

Cheese Chowder

¼ c butter
1 c chopped onions
½ c chopped celery stalk
½ c chopped carrots
¼ c all-purpose flour
3 c fresh milk
1 c water
1 tsp prepared mustard
¼ tsp finely ground black pepper
2½ c cubed quickmelt cheese
250 g bottled cheese spread
¼ c chopped parsley or spring onions

Melt the butter over medium heat in a large stockpot. Add onions, celery and carrots. Sauté until the vegetables are tender. Add flour. Mix well.

Pour in milk and water. Allow to boil. Pour in the remaining ingredients and simmer until thick.

Fruit Stuffed Chicken

2 pcs chicken (approximately 1 kilo each)
¼ c calamansi juice
Salt and pepper to taste
½ c garlic-flavored margarine
Stuffing:
½ c chopped red apples
½ c well-drained canned pineapple
½ c sliced canned *rambutan* or lychee
½ c chopped dried mango
½ c raisins
Glaze:
2 tbsp butter
¼ c orange marmalade or mango jam
1 tbsp soy sauce
Gravy:
2 tbsp butter
2 tbsp all-purpose flour
½ pc chicken broth cube
1 c drippings
1 tsp Worcestershire sauce

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Marinate the chicken in calamansi juice for 15 minutes. Season the chicken with salt and pepper to taste. Massage the cavity and skin of the chicken with garlic-flavored margarine. Transfer to an ovenproof dish.

Combine ingredients for the stuffing in a mixing bowl. Stuff chickens with the mixture. Bake for 45 minutes.

While the chicken is in the oven, melt butter in a saucepan. Turn off the heat and quickly stir in the orange marmalade/mango jam and soy sauce.

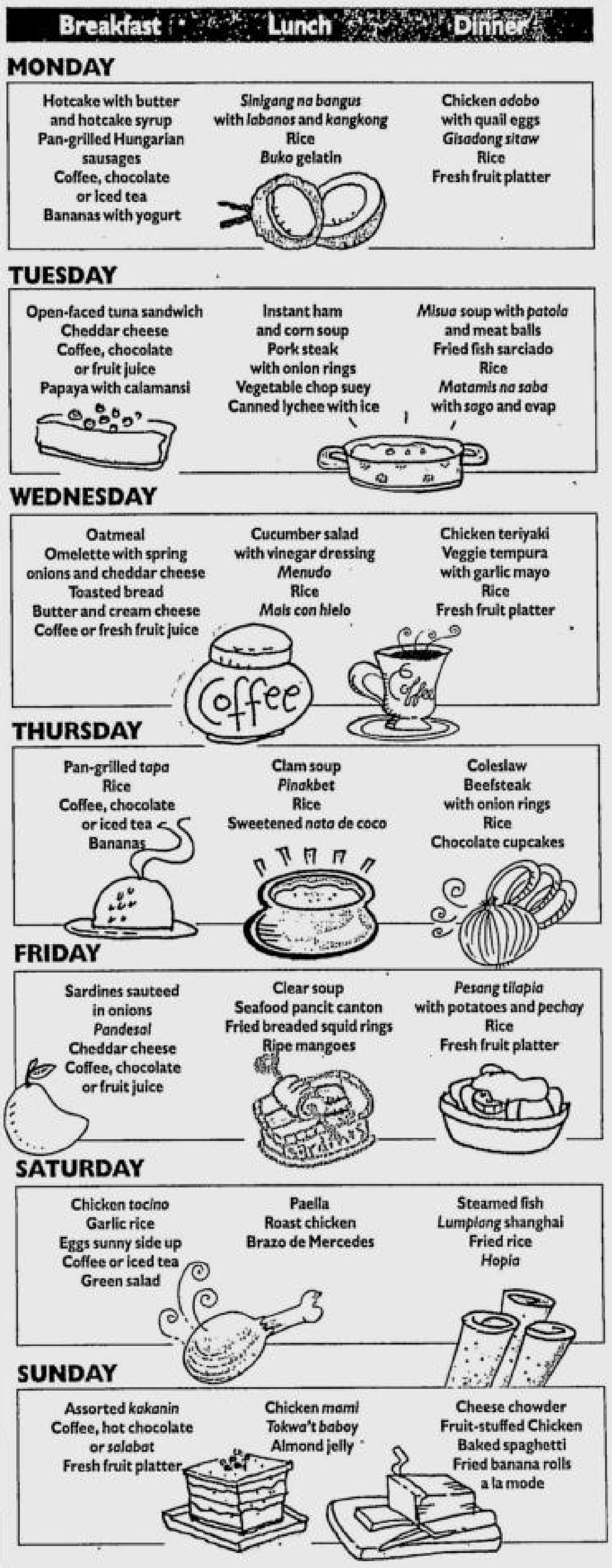
After 45 minutes of baking, baste the chicken with the prepared glaze every five minutes. Bake for 15 minutes more or until the chicken is thoroughly cooked.

To prepare the gravy, pour the drippings from the baking pan in a measuring cup. Add water if necessary. In a heavy saucepan, over medium heat, melt the butter. Quickly stir in flour and chicken cube. Pour in drippings and Worcestershire sauce. Continue to cook until thick. Adjust seasonings if necessary.

Fried Banana Rolls a la Mode

12 pcs *saba* bananas
Dark brown sugar
Lumpia wrapper
Oil for frying
Sauce:
1 c white sugar
¼ c water
1 tbsp calamansi juice
2 pcs *pandan* leaves
1 tbsp butter
1 tsp sesame seeds
Macapuno or mango ice cream

Peel and slice vertically the bananas into two. Put a piece of banana in the lower end of a *lumpia* wrapper. Sprinkle bananas with an adequate amount of brown sugar. Fold the sides of the wrapper toward the center. Roll into a tight log starting from the end where you placed the banana.



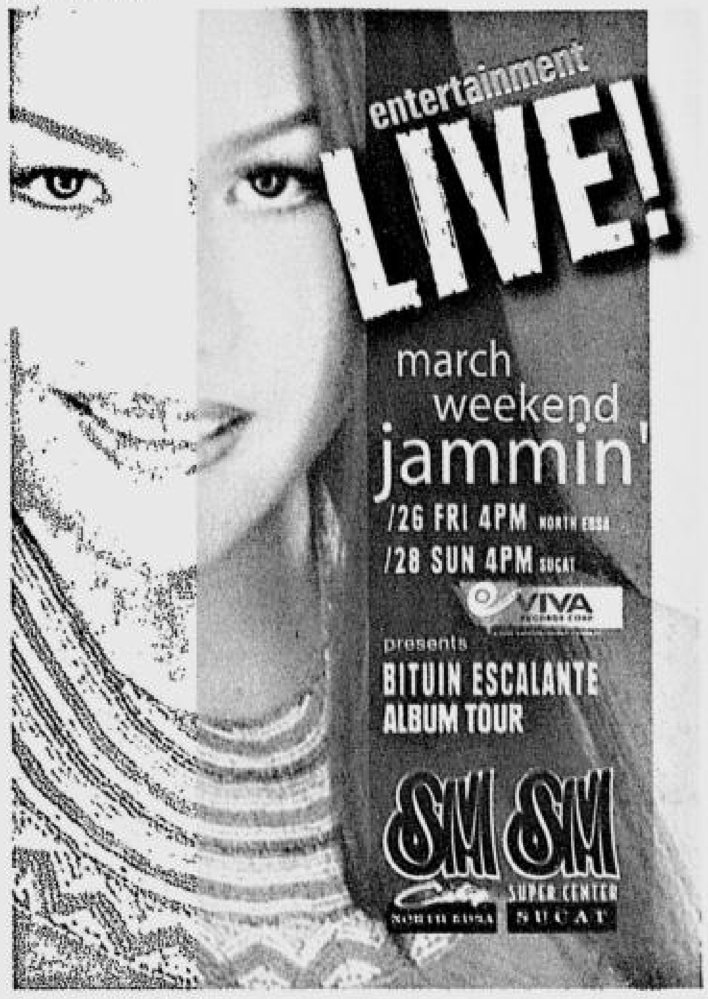
	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
MONDAY	Hotcake with butter and hotcake syrup Pan-grilled Hungarian sausages Coffee, chocolate or iced tea Bananas with yogurt	*Sinigang na bangus* with *labanos* and *kangkong* Rice *Buko* gelatin	Chicken *adobo* with quail eggs *Gisadong sitaw* Rice Fresh fruit platter
TUESDAY	Open-faced tuna sandwich Cheddar cheese Coffee, chocolate or fruit juice Papaya with calamansi	Instant ham and corn soup Pork steak with onion rings Vegetable chop suey Canned lychee with ice	*Misua* soup with *patola* and meat balls Fried fish sarciado Rice *Matamis na saba* with *sago* and evap
WEDNESDAY	Oatmeal Omelette with spring onions and cheddar cheese Toasted bread Butter and cream cheese Coffee or fresh fruit juice	Cucumber salad with vinegar dressing *Menudo* Rice *Mais con hielo*	Chicken teriyaki Veggie tempura with garlic mayo Rice Fresh fruit platter
THURSDAY	Pan-grilled *tapa* Rice Coffee, chocolate or iced tea Bananas	Clam soup *Pinakbet* Rice Sweetened *nata de coco*	Coleslaw Beefsteak with onion rings Rice Chocolate cupcakes
FRIDAY	Sardines sauteed in onions *Pandesal* Cheddar cheese Coffee, chocolate or fruit juice	Clear soup Seafood pancit canton Fried breaded squid rings Ripe mangoes	*Pesang tilapia* with potatoes and *pechay* Rice Fresh fruit platter
SATURDAY	Chicken *tocino* Garlic rice Eggs sunny side up Coffee or iced tea Green salad	Paella Roast chicken Brazo de Mercedes	Steamed fish *Lumpiang* shanghai Fried rice *Hopia*
SUNDAY	Assorted *kakanin* Coffee, hot chocolate or *salabat* Fresh fruit platter	Chicken *mami* *Tokwa't baboy* Almond jelly	Cheese chowder Fruit-stuffed Chicken Baked spaghetti Fried banana rolls a la mode

Seal the edges with water. Deep fry, end side down until golden brown.

To prepare the sauce, caramelize sugar in a thick wok over medium low heat. Pour in water, calamansi, *pandan* leaves and butter. Allow to boil and then simmer until the caramelized sugar completely melts and blends with the ingredients. Sprinkle sesame seeds all over and turn off the heat.

To assemble, slice the *turon* into two portions diagonally. Place a generous amount of ice cream in the center of a platter. Surround with the *turon*. Sprinkle a generous amount of sauce all over. Serve immediately.

Dorothy MJ Ferreria offers cooking, baking and cake decorating classes at Dorothy's Cooking School in Quezon City and in key provincial cities. For Bacolod classes next month, call (034) 4340445. For Manila classes, call 7217735 or e-mail dorothyferreria@skyinet.net



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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0619, Series of 2004.

Fit for a queen

QUEEN Elizabeth II of England is served cornflakes and oatmeal for breakfast using Tupperware containers.

This was disclosed in a recent article in the New York Times which published the first undercover look inside the royal family undertaken by British newspaper The Daily Mirror. Reporter Ryan Parry disguised himself as a footman after peddling a fake resume with his given name on it and worked in the Buckingham Palace for eight weeks.

Other details included that the Queen is tended by not less than 10 servants at tea time: two footmen, two kitchen porters, two chefs, two silver pantry under-butlers, a page and a coffee-room maid. Lest they wear a trail in the carpets, servants are told to walk along the edges of the hallways. And if a member of the family happens by, they must stand against the nearest wall and bow. Sometimes the Queen eats dinner in front of the television set, her remote control right there on the tray. She favors a popular soap opera.

ELIZABETH II's food is served using Tupperware containers.

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Tupperware products were cited in the Guinness Book of World Records as one of the top 10 enduring symbols of the 20th century and have been displayed at 16 design, art and history museums worldwide, from the Metropolitan Museum in New York, to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

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STORY ON PAGE E2

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Heny Sison

THE ESSENTIAL BAKING & PASTRY SERIES: This 26 – day hands-on class will cover the basics of pastry, desserts, bread baking as well as cake decorating. It is suitable for those seeking an entry-level position in pastry shop, hotel or restaurant. Classes begin on April 19 – July 20, 2004. Classes are held every Mondays & Tuesdays from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

THE ESSENTIAL COOKING SERIES: This 20 – day hands-on class is our innovative way of teaching the basics of cooking and baking. This program is for anyone who wants to work towards becoming a professional chef. Classes begin on April 21 – June 3, 2004. Classes are held every Wednesdays, Thursdays & Fridays from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Tuition fee includes ingredients, manual, aprons, chef's jacket and chef's kit.
For more information call 726-5316 & 412-7792 and ask for Lino & Rita.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

April 1 (Thursday) 9:00a.m.-1:30 p.m. (classroom A) BASIC CAKES & ICINGS FOR BEGINNERS P1,500 by: Heny Sison* Butter Cake w/ Butter Icing, Moist Chocolate Cake w/ Fudge Icing, Mocha Cake w/ No-Melt Butter Icing, Lemon Chiffon Cake w/ Boiled Icing & Sponge Cake w/ Whipped Cream Icing

April 1 (Thursday) 2:00 – 5:30 p.m. (classroom A) MYFAVORITECAKES P1,500 by: Heny Sison* Caramel Cake II, Banana Nut Cake, Pandan – Macapuno Cake, Flourless Chocolate Cake, Peach Walnut Torte and Brazo de Mercedes

April 1 (Thursday)10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom B) DOUGHNUT WORKSHOP P 2,500 by: Chef Jane Paredes, Food Consultant, co-owner of Simply Desserts trained at the Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, New York and Peter Kump's New York Cooking School* Recipes: Sugar Honey – Glazed, Caramel Pecan, Chocolate Nut, Mango Glazed, Chocolate Bavarian, Blueberry Filled, Strawberry Filled, Apple Filled, Twist Cinnamon Sugar & Beignets (French Doughnuts)

April 2 (Friday)9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A)SIOPAO & MAMI WORKSHOP P2,500 by: Chef Katherine Sion, restaurateur (Ding Hao & Fat Kat), food consultant to caterer & an expert in Chinese Cusine* Chicken Bola-bola Pao, Asado Pao, Bola-bola Pao, Jumbo Siopao with Chinese Sausage, Chicken Asado Mami & Beef Mami

April 2 (Friday)1:00 – 5:00 p.m. (classroom B)JAPANESECOOKINGI P1,700(All Time Favorite Japanese Recipes)by: Chef Koichi Kondo, licensed cook from Ehime, Japan and food consultant to various Japanese restaurants.* Miso Soup, Tempura, Nimono, Yakimono, California Maki, Chilled Soba, Noodles with Nori, Skewered Dumplings with Brown Sauce

April 3 (Saturday)10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m. (classroom A)BASIC FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS P2,500 by: Glenn Remorca, floral designer* Learn the theories, styles, trends, techniques, sourcing, flower care & maintenance, basic form, arrangement and flower for weddings. Lecture, demonstration and hands-on production. Bring a pair of scissors

April 3 (Saturday)10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (classroomB)FRESHPASTA WORKSHOP P2,500 by: Chef Giorgio Bucciarelli, Master Pizzaiolo & Barista, food consultant of various Italian restaurants all over Metro Manila, graduated at Culinary Institute, Milan, Italy* There is simply no comparison between homemade hand-formed pasta and the store bought stuff. Homemade is not only tastier but a lot easier to make than you think. Learn how to make pasta egg dough, green spinach dough, black pasta dough, different kinds of pastas: lasagna, green lasagna, ravioli, tortellini, cannelloni, fettuccine: green & black, stuffings for ravioli, tortellini and cannelloni. Sauces for lasagna, tortellini, ravioli & cannelloni. Recipes: Lasagna alla Bolognese, Lasagna ai 4 Formaggi, Lasagna al Pesto, Cannelloni alla Ricotta and Spinaci, Ravioli alla Boscaiola al Burro e Salvia, Tortellini ai 4 Formaggi, alla Panna Prosciutto e Funghi, Green Fettuccine alla Montanara, Black Fettuccine ai Frutti di Mare. Demonstration with student participation.

April 5 (Monday)9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (classroom A)BROWNIE WORKSHOP P2,500 by: Chef Jill Sandique, Food Consultant, & Food Stylist, Blue Ribbon graduate of Peter Kump's New York Cooking School. * Fudgy Brownies, Chocolate Chip Peanut Butter Blondies, Chocolate Chip Walnut Bars, Cappuccino Brownies, Butterscotch Brownies, Marbled Cream Cheese Brownies, Fruit & Nut Bars & White Chocolate Brownies

April 5 (Monday)9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon (classroom B)QUICK BREADS P1,500 by: Heny Sison* Apple Walnut Loaf, Banana Nut Bread, Zucchini Bread, Apple-Cinnamon Muffins, Dark Moist Bran Muffins and Carrot Muffins

April 5 (Monday)1:00 – 5:00 p.m. (classroom B)KOREAN COOKING I P1,700 by: Chef Young Hee Kim Park, owner of Silla Korean Restaurant & food consultant to various Korean restaurants in Metro Manila
Beef Bulgogi (tenderloin & ordinary), Chicken Bulgogi, Pork Bulgogi, Chap Chae, Miyuk Guk (Soup : Seaweed, Beef or Tahong), Bibimbap & Kalbi Jhim (Braised Short Ribs Stew)

April 6 (Tuesday)9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon (classroom A)COOKIESFORCOFFEE P1,500 by: Heny Sison* Chunky Chewy White Choco Macadamia Cookies, Espresso Biscotti, Chocolate Chip Biscotti, Greek Cookies and Almond Wafer

April 6 (Tuesday)1:00 – 4:00 p.m. (Classroom A) COFFEE! COFFEE! COFFEE!P1,500 by: Chef Aileen Anastacio, owner of Goodies N' Sweet Bakeshop & C'est Si Bon, Dean's list graduate of Culinary at the California Culinary Academy* If you are planning to open a coffee shop this course is for you. Learn the four fundamentals of coffee brewing, home espresso, guide to steaming & foaming. Recipes: Caffè Latte, Caffè Mocha, Caffè Americano, Cappuccino, Espresso Macchiato & Espresso Con Panna. Make fun toppings & garnishes & master the art of coffee making.

April 6 (Tuesday)9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (classroom B) CHEESECAKEWORKSHOP P2,000 by: Chef Jill Sandique* No Frills Cheesecake, New York Cheesecake, Alsatian Cheesecake, Italian Ricotta Cheesecake, Triple Chocolate Cheesecake & Easy Oreo Cheesecake

April 12-14 & 16, 20 – 241st week(Mon. – Wed. & Friday) 2nd week(Tuesday Saturday) 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) MASTER IN CAKE DECORATION / BASIC P16,000 by: Heny Sison* A two-week practical basic cake decorating designed for shop owner, teacher, baker, chef and enthusiast. Includes fancy borders, over 20 icing flowers, color flow, method of printing and script, sugar molding, flower bunching, figure piping, decorated cookies, birthday & wedding cake assembly. Full participation.

April 12 (Monday)10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. (classroom B)PULUTAN 1 P2,000 by: Chef Jane Paredes* Sisig (Pork), Beef Tapa, Gambas with Crablet, Balot ala Pobre, Crispy Tenga ng Baboy, Lumpiang Shanghai & Baked Cheese – Garlic Mussels

April 13 (Tuesday)9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (classroom B) CHILDREN'S BAKING P1,500by: Chef Jill Sandique* Chocolate Crackles, Fudgy Brownies, Lemon Pie, Snickerdoodles, Oatmeal Raisin Cookies and Chocolate Chip Cookies

April 14 (Wednesday)9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (classroom B) PATTIES & TURNOVERS (Demo – Workshop) P2,500 by: Chef Jill Sandique* Indian Samosas, Jamaican Beef Patties, Cuban Empanadas, Chicken Mushroom Turnover & Stromboli plus bonus recipe.

April 15 (Thursday)9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (classroom B) CHILDREN COOKING P1,500 by: Chef Jill Sandique* Baked Chicken Drumsticks with Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, Spaghetti with Meat Sauce, Cheese Pimiento Pinwheels, Ice Cream Sundae with Homemade Butterscotch and Hot Fudge

April 16 (Friday)10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom B) PULUTAN II P2,000 by: Chef Jane Paredes* Bangus Belly Sisig, Laguna Cheese Stick with Spicy Mango Salsa, Crispy Shrimp Wontons with Sweet & Sour Sauce, Crispy Tadyang ng Baka, Chicken Satay, Crispy Crablets & Balut Pate with Melba Toast

April 17 (Saturday)9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) NATIVE KAKANIN WORKSHOP P2,500 by: Heny Sison* Tamales, Suman sa Lihia, Puto Bumbong, Espasol, Palitao & Maja Mais

April 17 (Saturday)10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (classroom B) PIZZA CLASS WORKSHOP P2,500 by: Chef Giorgio Bucciarelli* In this class you will learn the history, concept and design of pizza making. Learn how to make pizza dough, tomato base sauce, white sauce base, preparation, set up pizza counter, know the ingredients and toppings. Recipes: Margherita, Napoli Classica, 4 Formaggi, Pizza Vegetariana, La Gibiana, Piccantina, 4 Stagioni, Calzone & Frutti di Mare. Demonstration with student participation.

April 19 (Monday)9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (classroom B) BAKED PASTA P1,700 by: Aileen Anastacio* Beef Lasagna, Vegetable Lasagna, Chicken Macaroni, Baked Spaghetti and Baked Seafood Pasta

April 19 (Monday)1:30 – 5:30 p.m. (classroom B) THE MANY WAYS TO COOK CHICKEN P1,700 by: Aileen Anastacio* Citrus-Ginger Grilled Chicken, Chicken Cacciatore, Chicken Inasal, Thai Style Grilled Chicken, Roasted Chicken with Lemon, Garlic & Rosemary, Buffalo Wing & Chicken Bulgogi

April 24 (Saturday)10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom B) HOMEMADE SAUSAGES, CONDIMENTS P2,500& MARINADE WORKSHOP by: Chef Jane Paredes Discover ways to transform meat, poultry & seafood into profitable menu items. SAUSAGES: Chorizo Bilbao, Longanisa Ilongga, Italian Sausage, Seafood Sausage & Mexican Sausage; CONDIMENTS: Honey-Mustard Sauce, Sweet Pickles Chips & Atchara; MARINADE: Homemade Tapa, Homemade Bulgogi & Tocino DISHES: Sausage, Sauerkraut & Potato Casserole & Country Style Pork & Beans

April 26 (Monday)9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) BASIC BREAD BAKING WORKSHOP P2,500 by: Heny Sison* Learn the variety of breads using basic sweet dough. Recipes: Pan de Sal, Cinnamon Roll, Adobo Roll, Cheese Roll & Dinner Roll

April 27 (Tuesday)9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) DIMSUM I P1,500 by: Chef Katherine Sion, restaurateur (Ding Hao & Fat Kat restaurant), caterer & an expert in Chinese cuisine* Congee, Siomai, Dumpling, Chicken Feet, Fried Shrimp Ball and Buchi

April 28 (Wednesday)9:00 – 1:00 p.m. (classroom A) CAKES WITH DISTINCTION P1,500 by: Heny Sison* Sinful Chocolate Cake, Caramel Cake, Custard Cake, Canonigo with Crème Anglaise & Mango Coulis and Layered Brazo de Mercedes

April 28 (Wednesday)1:30 – 5:30 p.m. (Classroom A) JAPANESE COOKING II P1,700 by: Chef Koichi Kondo* Clam Soup, Miso Soup with Pork and Vegetables, Soup with Rice Cakes, Beef Salad, As-You-Like-It Pancake, Rolled Omelette, Candied Sweet Potatoes & Shrimp Fry

April 29 (Thursday)9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) POPULAR CHINESE DISHES FOR CATERING I P1,700 by: Chef Katherine Sion* Sweet Corn Soup with Crabmeat, Braised Pata Tim with Vegetables, Saute Shrimp with Greenpeas & Quail Egg, Peking Noodles with Chopseuy, Fried Rice with Assorted Meats, Fried Crispy Chicken Chinese Style & Buchi

April 30 (Friday)9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (classroom A) SOFT PRETZEL WORKSHOP P1,700 by: Heny Sison* Learn how to make hand rolled soft pretzels with a variety of toppings & dippings. Cinnamon Sugar, Whole Wheat Soft Pretzels, Poppy Seed, Coarse Salt and Sesame Seeds and more! Match them with cream cheese, caramel & soft cheese dippings.

April 30 (Friday)1:30 – 5:30 p.m (classroom A) KOREAN COOKING II P1,700 by: Chef Cecile Park* Denjang Gook, Yukjeh – Jang, Kimchi Chiego, Bulgogi Jungol, Kalbi Jhim, Bibim Bap, Chap Chae, Haemul pa Jeon, Dubu Chiejo & Dilld, Togue, Spinach

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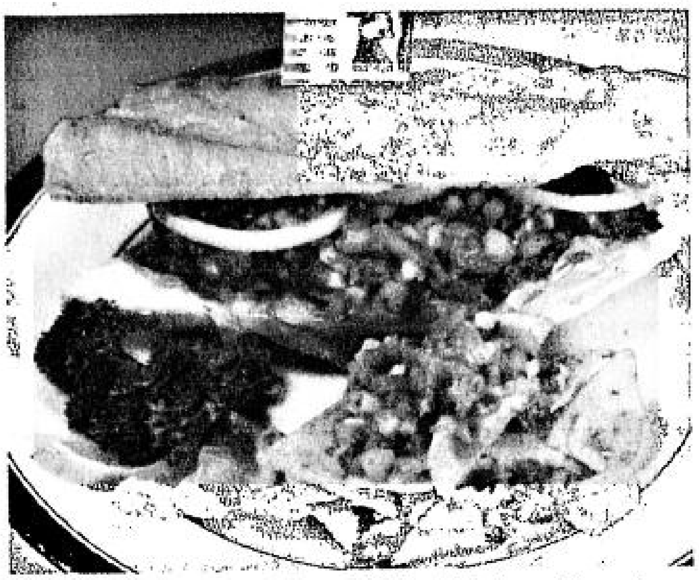

BEEF MEXICANA. Seared slices of sirloin with lettuce strips and freshly made mango tomato salsa

MARINARA open-faced omelette. An omelette variation with fillings consisting of shrimp, mussels and tuna in creamy sauce. Served with rolls, butter and slices of orange

GARLIC SAUSAGE. Spaghettini richly settled in red sauce, spiced with pesto and topped with circular sausage slices

All day, all night fine dining

RANCH RIVER FEAST. Beef, tuna and mussels in creamy mustard sauce on a bed of fried potato wedges

CIEF is a 24-hour fine dining place-cum-café at 229 Tomas Morato Avenue, Quezon City.

Pronounced Cee-ef, Cief stands for coffee and food.

Owner Mel Lagarde, who said Cief is a place for friends, would soon have souvenir knick-knacks and greeting cards.

The diner café is designed like a theater stage with the veranda and transparent glass walls giving passersby a view of the diners and vice versa.

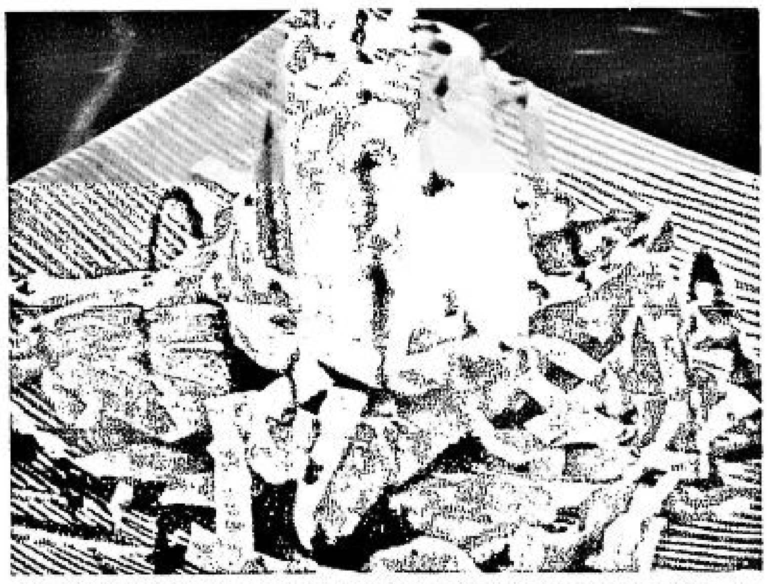
The coffee bar on the first floor serves Cieficcinos, the place's own iced coffee concoctions.

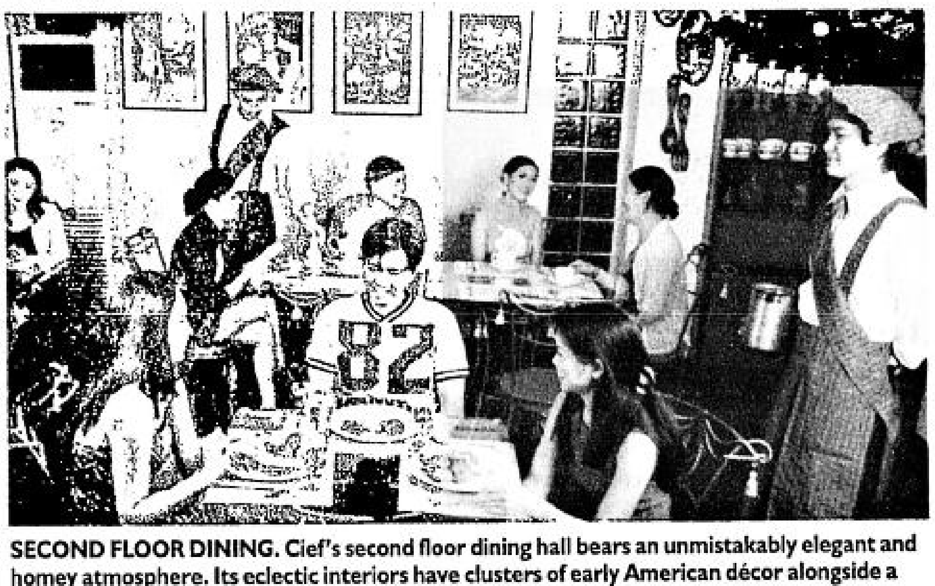
On the second floor, which is suitable for early breakfast meetings, Cief's ongoing Omelette Festival features an array of omelettes with fillings ranging from plain tomatoes and onions, vegetables, cheese, red and white meats, mushrooms and many more.

At lunchtime, group diners can enjoy international dishes from Cief's Cart du Joor. For only P290 per person, any entrees (including steak) is served with a salad or soup, plus "bottomless" iced tea.

For snacks, Cief has gourmet sandwiches, ice-blends in different flavors, and an assortment of pastas and pizzas.

After 1 a.m., Cief offers Hot Soup Meal for only P120.


CARAMELIZED BANANA A LA MODE. Caramelized sheet banana fritters topped with ice cream, fried wanton and drizzled with caramel syrup


SECOND FLOOR DINING. Cief's second floor dining hall bears an unmistakably elegant and homey atmosphere. Its eclectic interiors have clusters of early American décor alongside a Monet-inspired painting by Eduardo Adriano, a La Salle professor whose art pieces are generously mounted all over the café for a month-long exhibit.

More food treats for graduates

SHAKE korokke is Kimpura's Under the Sea Delights offering.

KIMPURA, the pioneering Japanese restaurant, offers graduates a special treat.

Until April 4, the restaurant gives two complimentary dishes, *shake korokke* (shredded fresh salmon in a creamy potato croquette) and creamy tuna (rare tuna slices served with creamy spicy sauce), with a minimum food bill of P3,500+.

Kimpura has also new dishes for summer. Under the Sea Delights consist of six seafood dishes—*uni* tempura (sea urchin roe wrapped in seaweed and cooked tempura style), lapu-lapu marine (slices of lapu-lapu lightly fried in corn oil and marinated in sweet vinaigrette), *une oroshi soba* or *udon* (cold noodles flavored with grated radish, pickled plum and fish flakes), *tai no umeni* (smoky grilled lapu-lapu fillet in a plum flavored sauce), creamy tuna and *shake korokke*.

Kimpura is at 2/L, Glorietta 1, Ayala Center, Makati City (tel. 8932307, 8924456); and Greenhills Shopping Center, San Juan (7218816, 721 8869).

Budget-friendly

Jade Garden Cantonese Restaurant offers two enticing and budget-friendly set menus for graduates and their families or friends. The graduation special set menu has roasted meat combination, winter melon soup with dried scallops, baked shrimps with *e-fu* noodles, oil-simmered King fish, stir-fried cuttlefish with broccoli, and fried rice with bacon and garlic. Price for four persons is P1,900+ and for eight, P3,800.

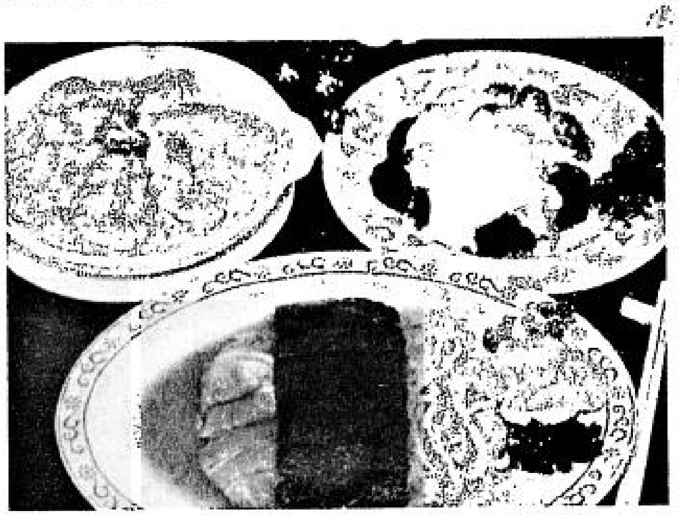
Newly renovated, Jade Garden, an affiliate of Maxim's Restaurants Hong Kong, has a variety of set menus for different celebration. Call 8922319 or 8124548. Jade Garden is at Greenbelt 1, Ayala Center, Makati City.

Set menus

Peking Garden Chinese Restaurant has special graduation set menus.

Specializing in northern Chinese cuisine, Peking Garden has a set menu priced at P4,500+ for 12 persons; and P2,300+ for six persons. Dishes include crispy vegetables with fried mashed shrimps on toast, sweet corn with fresh crabmeat soup, deep-fried shredded beef with chili wrapped in crispy sesame puff, scrambled egg white with assorted seafood, sizzling chicken with spicy sauce, deep-fried garlic spareribs, Peking Garden fried rice, steamed supreme soup and pork dumpling, and chilled mango shake with sago for dessert.

An affiliate of Maxim's Hong Kong, Peking Garden is at the 2/L, Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati City, tel. 8179066/67.


THE BEST of Cantonese dishes like baked shrimps with *e-fu* noodles, stir-fried cuttle fish with broccoli and roasted meat combination are available as Jade Garden's graduation treat.

PEKING Garden serves deep-fried shredded beef with chili wrapped in crispy sesame puff for its graduation set menu.

Festival showcases best regional produce

AN ARRAY of fresh fruits in season is showcased in Robinsons Supermarket's Summer Fresh Festival.

ROBINSONS Supermarket holds the Summer Fresh Festival up to April 1 to showcase the best fresh produce selections from different regions during the dry season.

The festival features discounts, free trial packs, food shows, food tasting, product demonstrations and a grand raffle.

A wide variety of fruits and vegetables, as well as meat, fish, poultry and bakery products, will be available at substantial discounts.

Robinsons Supermarket has also organized a touring "Cook Fair" featuring regional specialties. The fair will be conducted 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at Robinsons Place Galleria, March 26; and Robinsons Place Cebu, March 27-28.

For the raffle promo, every P150 single receipt purchase from the Fresh Department until April 1 entitles a customer to one raffle coupon and the chance to win home appliances and Robinsons Supermarket gift checks.

To be given away are 14 Panasonic refrigerators (7 cu. ft.) with P1,500 worth of Robinsons gift certificates and 14 La Germania gas ranges with P1,000 worth of Robinsons gift certificates. Raffle draw date is April 14.

Authentic Chinese cuisine in Eastwood City

SAVOR the exotic taste of authentic Shanghai and Hong Kong cuisine everyday by visiting Shanghai Bistro at the new Eastwood City Walk II Libis.

Shanghai Bistro's wide range of dishes offers the best of true Shanghai and Hong Kong cuisine prepared by its award-winning Chinese chefs. These include Drunken Chicken, Sweet and Sour Pork, Stir-Fried Eel with Shredded Vegetables, Stir-Fried Shrimps in Tomato Sauce, Stewed Bamboo Shoots with Black Mushrooms and Dimsum favorites—Siao Lung Pao and Baked Custard Bun with Roasted Duck.

Shanghai Bistro has also acquired a Micros-Fidelio point-of-sales system to enhance their service. General Manager Ernest Lau said, "Micros is very flexible and makes it easy for us to update our menu. It has also proven to be user-friendly for our staff which ultimately increases our productivity."

Shanghai Bistro is located at Building A in Eastwood City Walk II Libis and is open daily for lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and dinner from 6:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. and up to 12 midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. Call 6877103 or 6872964.

TUNA Caesar's Salad, Greek Salad and Chef's Salad

Healthy salads for summer

SHAKEY'S offers Summer Salads so you can be healthier and look great for beach wear this season.

For only P85, enjoy servings of fresh Romaine lettuce for two in three delicious varieties: Greek Salad, Tuna Caesar's Salad and Chef's Salad.

Aside from crisp lettuce and cucumbers, the Greek Salad also includes black olives, salami slices, feta cheese, served with Shakey's own vinaigrette. The Tuna Caesar's Salad is topped with croutons, tuna and the classic dressing. The Chef's Salad is served with a sweet and tangy thousand-island dressing and garnished with slices of hard-boiled egg, delicious strips of ham and croutons.

Shakey's restaurants are open 10 a.m.-10 p.m., Monday through Sunday. For delivery, call 5338000. Visit www.shakeyspizza.ph.

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Restaurant's answer to Chinese hot pot

DINING OUT

MARIO'S Kitchen's meat and mushroom casserole

MARIO'S Kitchen presents meat and mushroom casserole topped with thick mashed potato and creamy cheese. Aside from this hot pot, the restaurant also serves Lengua con Setas, Ox Tongue in wine sauce with mushrooms and olives, Salpicado, Fish Fillet with mango salsa and Sinigang na Ulo ng Salmon sa Miso. Mario's Kitchen has outlets at Robinsons Galleria and Robinsons Place, Ermita. Call 7240196 or 6335995.

SHANGHAI Bistro offers the best of Shanghai and Hong Kong cuisine like Drunken Chicken, Sweet and Sour Pork, Stir-Fried Eel with Shredded Vegetables, Stir-Fried Shrimps in Tomato Sauce, Stewed Bamboo Shoots with Black Mushrooms and Dimsum. Shanghai Bistro is located at Building A in Eastwood City Walk II Libis. Call 6877103 or 6872964.

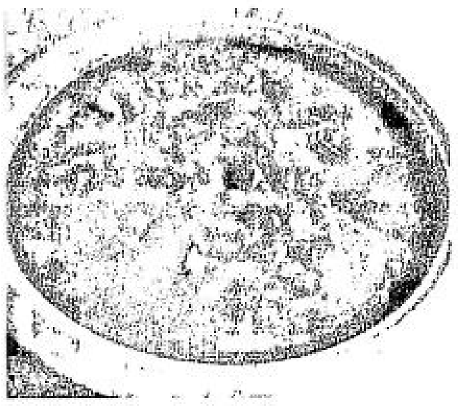
SITIO Pilipino features Pinaputok na Tilapia, Kare-Kareng Bangus, soups and salads, grilled seafood, pork, meat and chicken dishes. Sitio Pilipino is located at the Podium in Ortigas. Call 6353056.

KULINARYA Kitchen serves Gamberi Pasta, Chilean Sea Bass, Pan-seared Red Snapper, Crispy Calamari and Papaya this month. The restaurant is located at the concourse level of Rockwell Power Plant in Makati. Call 7574369.

KAMAYAN brings back all-time favorites: Sitsaron Balat ng Manok, Chicken Binakol, Sabaw ng Biyas, Mechado, Crispy Pusit, Sinanglay, Kaldereta Baka sa Gata and Kamayan Lechon de Leche this March. Call 5317292 or 5316101.

KAMAYAN'S Crispy Pusit—deep fried baby squid; Kalderetang Baka sa Gata—stewed slow-simmered beef with red tomato sauce and thick coco milk, cooked with young coco fruit and red and green bell pepper; and Sinanglay—steamed fish wrapped in *pechay* leaves, stuffed with onions and tomatoes and cooked in rich coconut milk

DAD'S features the Spanish Festival Buffet until April. Dishes include Zarzuela de Mariscos, Codillo ala Alemana, Gambas Granadinas, Mariscada, Paella, Callos and Lengua. Call 5317292 or 5316101.


DAD'S Zarzuela de Marciscos—squid *lapu lapu*, shrimp, mussels and clams flavored with tomato soup

CALIFORNIA Pizza Kitchen offers combination dishes like Sesame Ginger Chicken Dumplings and Tandoori Chicken Pizza; Broccoli/Sun-dried Tomato Fusilli and the Classic Caesar; Oriental Chicken Salad and Sedona White Corn Tortilla and Dakota Smashed Pea and Barley Soup in its Great Slice Off Deal, ongoing until April 30. CPK is located at Glorietta 3 (8939898 or 8939999), Alabang Town Center (8505771 or 8506752), Shangri-La Plaza (6877841 or 6877842), Tomas Morato (3727371 or 3727372).

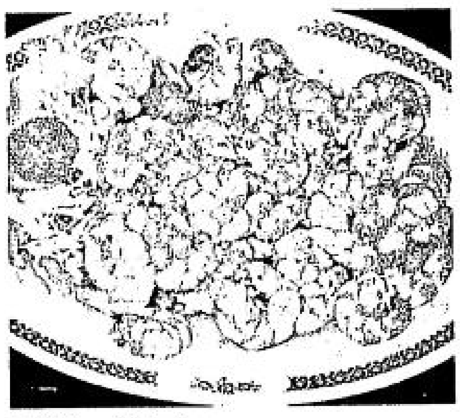
SORABOL Korean BBQ serves BBQ Chicken Bowl, BBQ Squid Bowl, BBQ Beef Bowl and Lemon Chicken Bowl. For every purchase of four rice bowls, the customer is entitled to a free Veggie Noodle Soup. Sorabol is located at Robinsons Place Ermita (5210211), SM Southmall (8004729) and Greenbelt 3 (7574006).

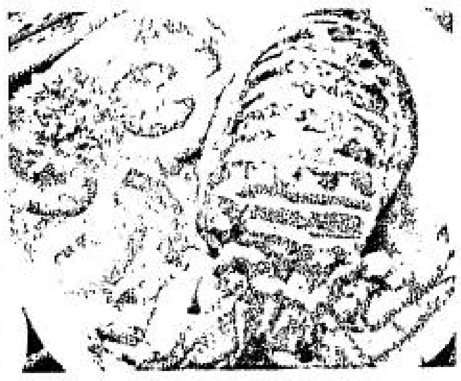
EBIZU Izakaya presents Ebisu Chicken in garlic soy marinade, Shake no Miso Mayo, Saikoro Steak, sashimi, donburi meals, bento boxes. Ebizu is located at Eastwood City Walk 2.

JOSEPHINE Restaurant Tagaytay offers weekend buffet for breakfast and lunch at P220 and P295, respectively. Call (46) 4131801 or 4131802.

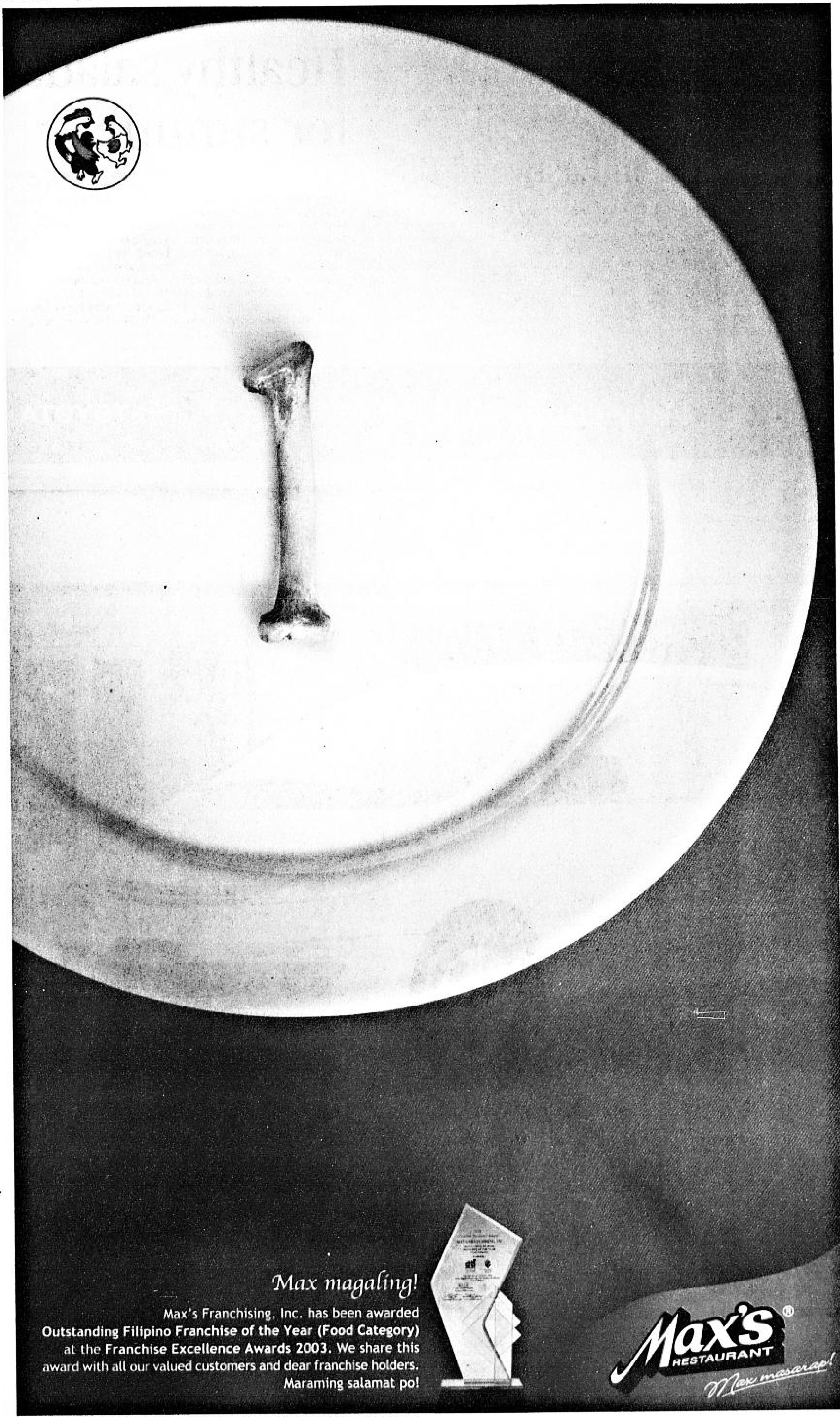
EDSA Shangri-La's Nishiki features Nabemono for lunch and dinner. These include Baby Lobster, assorted vegetables and Japanese glass noodles with seafood broth; Boiled Duck Breast, vegetables, tofu and Japanese grass noodles in bonito stock; Pork Loin, vegetables and tofu with spicy dashi; Shabu Shabu. Call 6338888.

RED DOOR Resto, Grill and Cocktails features Shrimp Gambas, Buffalo Chicken Wings, Crispy Croquettes, Sisig, Liempo, Crispy Pata. Red Door is located at 173 Pasig Blvd., Pasig.


RED Door's Gambas


SITIO'S Inihaw na Pusit

EDSA Shangri-La's Nishiki



Max magaling!

Max's Franchising, Inc. has been awarded **Outstanding Filipino Franchise of the Year (Food Category)** at the **Franchise Excellence Awards 2003.** We share this award with all our valued customers and dear franchise holders. Maraming salamat po!

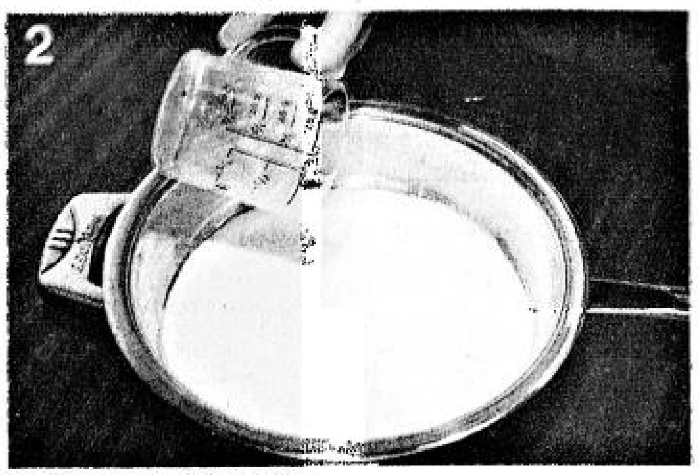
For franchise inquiries, call 8321991 local 150 or fax us at 8514994.

Wake up and smell the mountain coffee /F3

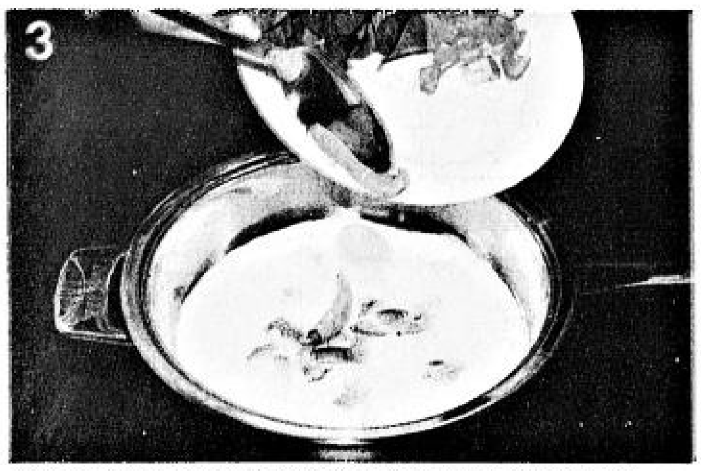
LIFESTYLE

For feedback, text us at (0919)880-33-54
or email us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

SEASON bangus fillet with salt and pepper. Set aside.



POUR coconut milk into a pan.



ADD onions, ginger and *siling* Tagalog. Simmer for a few minutes.

Tasteful new dish for meatless Lent

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Randy Hormillosa

LET'S admit it. We enjoy *bangus* in any form: *tinapa*, *daing*, *relleno*, *tocho*, *sinigang*, *paksiw*, *kilawin*, grilled or just plain fried. Whichever way you want it cooked, the unbeatable sweetness of *bangus* flesh makes for a delectable feast minus the guilt and the cholesterol—especially for the health-conscious.

For this Lenten recipe, the country's versatile national fish is cooked in coconut milk, with a little ginger and onion to heighten the flavor, for a wonderful and novel dish.

The Guinataang Bangus Fillet is served on a bed of *kangkong* leaves and topped with slices of tomatoes for a very filling main dish.

"Guinataang Bangus Fillet may be a simple recipe but rich in flavor. The coconut milk complements the mild, sweet flesh of *bangus*, with a hint of chili to perk up the appetite," says Diana Santamaria of Bangus Restaurant and Cater Club, which provides catering services.

Santamaria adds that fresh fish, like *bangus*, are like vegetables; they should not be too heavily seasoned or they will lose their simple, natural goodness. Fish should only be enhanced with other flavors.

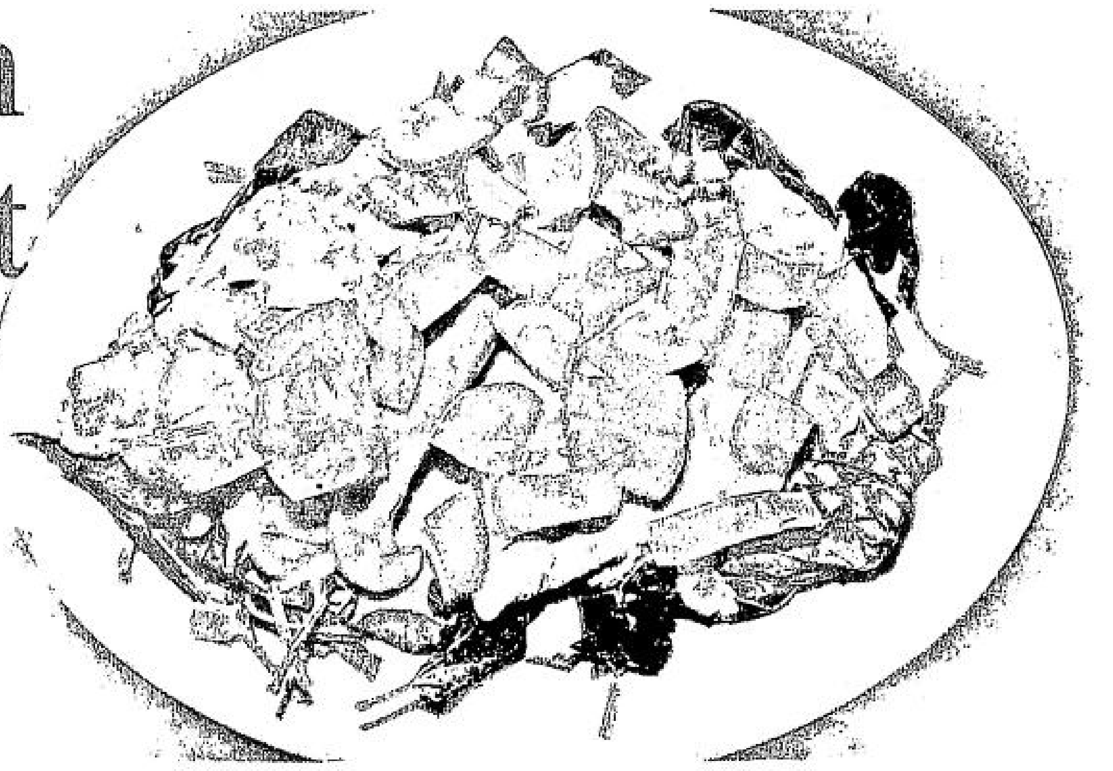
Bangus fillets are easily available in supermarkets, as well as in Bangus restaurants (tels. 7253038 and 7228750).

If you want to use another fish aside from *bangus* for this recipe, Santamaria suggests fillets of *tilapia*, *mahi-mahi*, *lapu-lapu*, *samaral*, *pampano* or *talakitok*. "Whatever you choose, make sure it is fresh, and you cannot go wrong," she notes. Remember the basic rule: If it smells "fishy," it's not fresh. Good fresh fish should smell like ocean breeze.

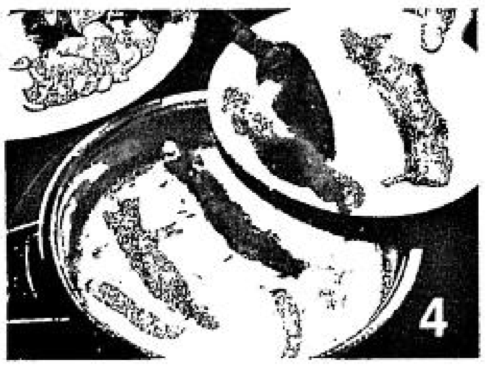
50 g *bangus* fillets
1 c coconut milk
1 c *kangkong* leaves
½ c onion, diced
½ c tomato, diced
1 pc *siling* Tagalog
Salt and pepper to taste

For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

STEP BY STEP

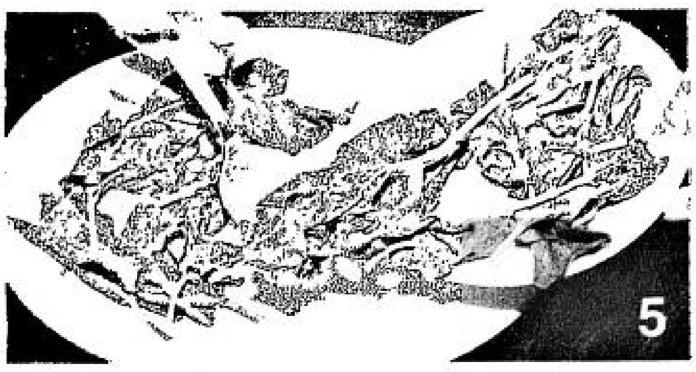


GUINATAANG
Bangus Fillet

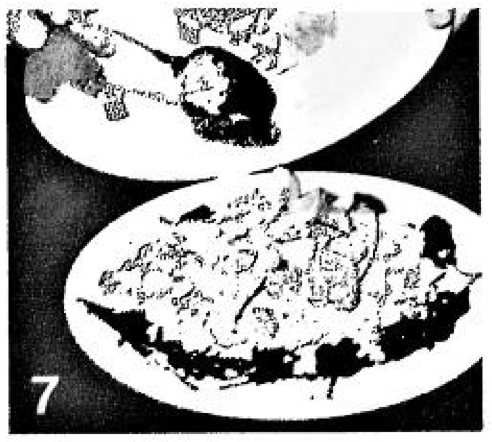


DROP *bangus* fillet and cook for five minutes. Meanwhile, steam *kangkong* leaves.

ARRANGE *kangkong* leaves on a platter.



PLACE *bangus* fillets on a bed of *kangkong*.



TOP with tomatoes. Serve hot.

Turn your graduation treat into a sumptuous Japanese feast.

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• Salmon Croquette
• Creamy Tuna
For a minimum order of P 3,500

*Up to April 4, 2004 only.
Promo not valid with other existing discounts.

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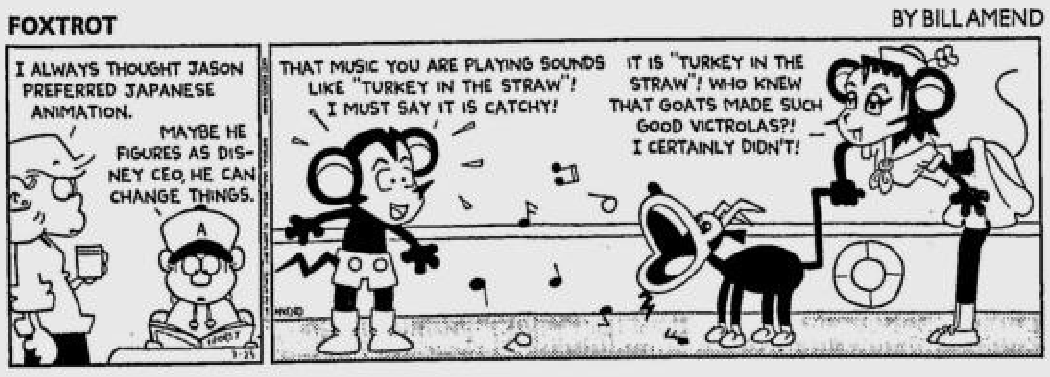
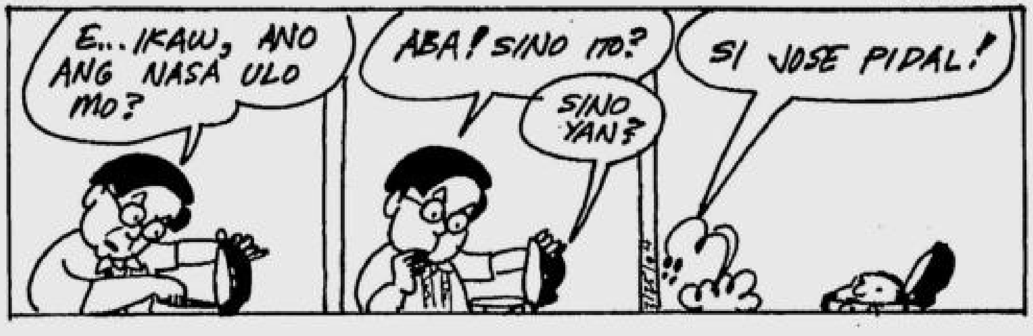
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


I ALWAYS THOUGHT JASON PREFERRED JAPANESE ANIMATION.
MAYBE HE FIGURES AS DISNEY CEO, HE CAN CHANGE THINGS.
THAT MUSIC YOU ARE PLAYING SOUNDS LIKE "TURKEY IN THE STRAW"! I MUST SAY IT IS CATCHY!
IT IS "TURKEY IN THE STRAW"! WHO KNEW THAT GOATS MADE SUCH GOOD VICTROLAS?! I CERTAINLY DIDN'T!

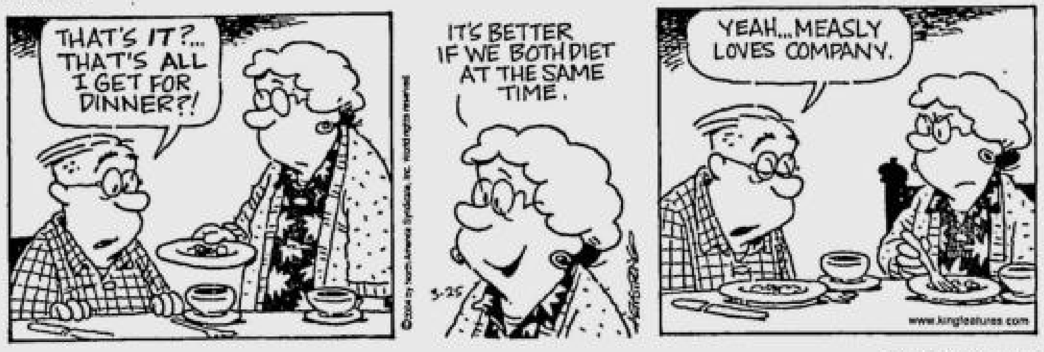
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


E... IKAW, ANO ANG NASA ULO MO?
ABA! SINO ITO?
SINO YAN?
SI JOSE PIDAL!

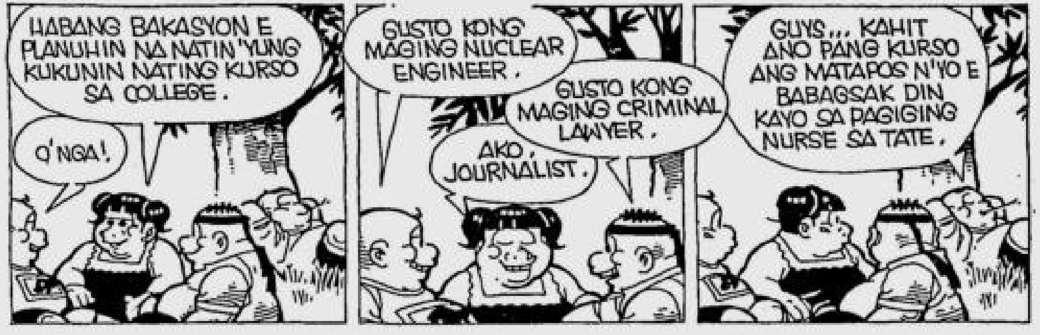
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


THAT'S IT?... THAT'S ALL I GET FOR DINNER?!
IT'S BETTER IF WE BOTH DIET AT THE SAME TIME.
YEAH... MEASLY LOVES COMPANY.
www.kingfeatures.com

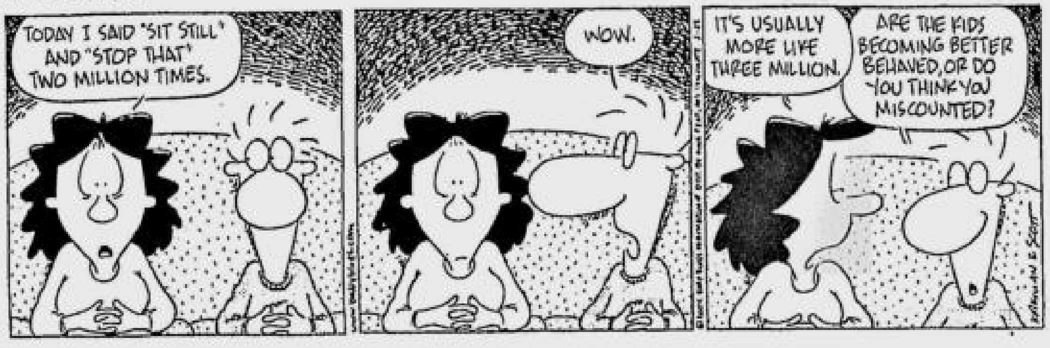
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


HABANG BAKASYON E PLANUHIN NA NATIN 'YUNG KUKUNIN NATING KURSO SA COLLEGE.
O'NGA!
GUSTO KONG MAGING NUCLEAR ENGINEER.
GUSTO KONG MAGING CRIMINAL LAWYER.
AKO, JOURNALIST.
GUYS... KAHIT ANO PANG KURSO ANG MATAPOS N'YO E BABAGSAK DIN KAYO SA PAGIGING NURSE SA TATE.

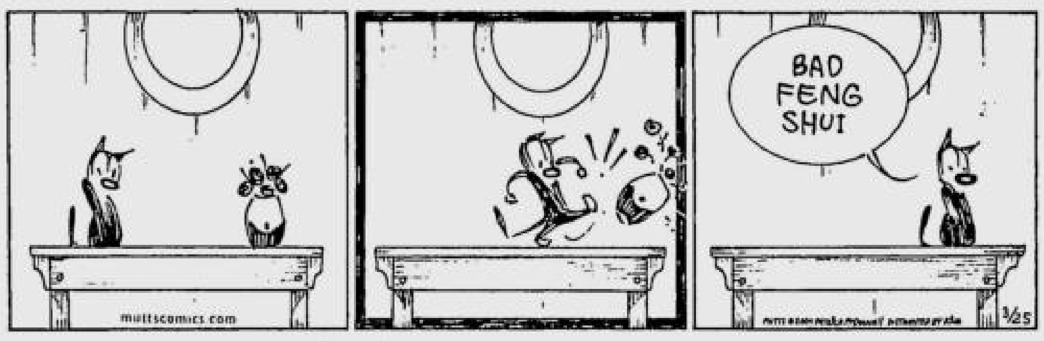
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


TODAY I SAID "SIT STILL" AND "STOP THAT" TWO MILLION TIMES.
WOW.
IT'S USUALLY MORE LIKE THREE MILLION.
ARE THE KIDS BECOMING BETTER BEHAVED, OR DO YOU THINK YOU MISCOUNTED?

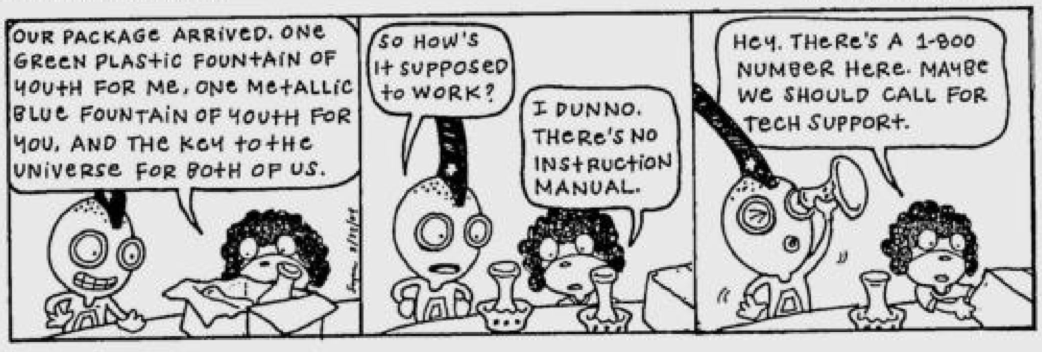
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


muttscomics.com
BAD FENG SHUI
3/25

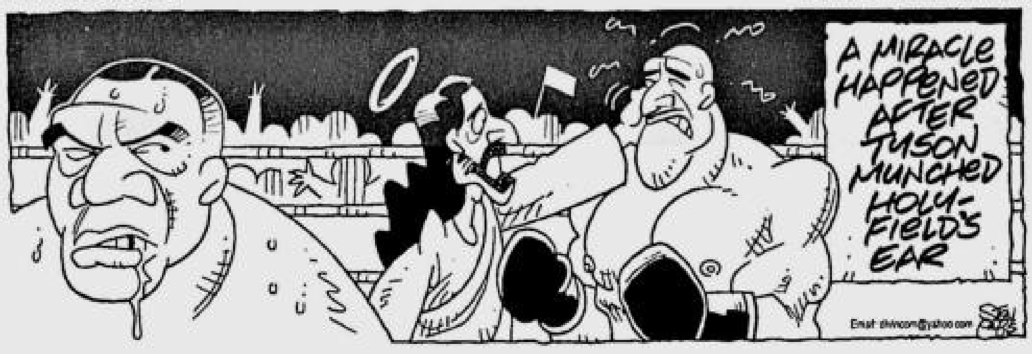
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


OUR PACKAGE ARRIVED. ONE GREEN PLASTIC FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH FOR ME, ONE METALLIC BLUE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH FOR YOU, AND THE KEY TO THE UNIVERSE FOR BOTH OF US.
SO HOW'S IT SUPPOSED TO WORK?
I DUNNO. THERE'S NO INSTRUCTION MANUAL.
HEY. THERE'S A 1-800 NUMBER HERE. MAYBE WE SHOULD CALL FOR TECH SUPPORT.

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


A MIRACLE HAPPENED AFTER TYSON MUNCHED HOLYFIELD'S EAR

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're energetic, talented and enthusiastic about life. You have confidence about your abilities. Loyal to your friends, you are nevertheless independent. You value family and home. You also guard your private life from public scrutiny. People admire your energy. Expect increased solitude this year, because you want to learn something important.
Birthdate of: Sarah Jessica Parker, actress; Elton John, singer; Aretha Franklin, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): With the Sun and Mercury in your sign now, you're confident, assertive and eager to talk to others. Go right ahead: You're in your element.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You need more rest. Energy is quantitative. Just as you have to put gas in your car, you have to replenish your own drive and stamina as well.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You want to get your way about something. Why not test the waters by talking to others first? This way, you can make their success your success as well.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Without any extra effort on your part, others easily respect you now. Accept this graciously. Do not dismiss it out of false modesty or doubt.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You're unusually thoughtful now. Happenings around you provoke this. You see that everything really boils down to how you live each moment. (Kindness is everything.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You want to become a better person in some way. You want to improve yourself. This can be twofold: Reduce your bad habits and encourage some good ones.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is not a time to go it alone. Work in partnership with others. It's also an excellent time to consult experts, counselors and professionals who can help in any way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You're given to extremes. You tend to see life in black and white terms. That's why your ability to work hard is astounding. Just keep plugging away—you amaze others!

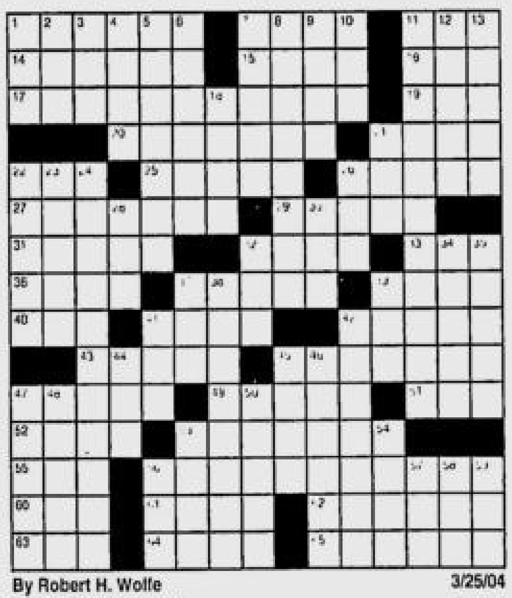
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is a good time to explore jobs (if you're looking) in resorts, hotels, professional sports, show business and the entertainment world. It's also a good time to work with children and education.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You need some time alone to sort some things out. Childhood memories and past family issues come to mind now. (But this time, you see it with the eyes of an adult.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Expect to be reading, writing and studying more than usual. (Some of you will be taking short trips as well.) The exchange of ideas stimulates your mind!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You're full of moneymaking ideas now. Don't be afraid to run them up the flagpole—what if someone salutes? Talk to others about your plans.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Robert H. Wolfe
North Woodmere, NY
3/25/04

ACROSS
1 African expanse
7 Make untidy
11 Soldier in gray
14 Insightfulness
15 One opposed
16 Sickly
17 Legitimate barkeep?
19 __-mo
20 Bulb type
21 Related
22 Tummy muscles
25 Choir voice
26 Bowshaped
27 Dues payers
29 Light wood
31 Kilt pattern
32 Expansive
33 Butter serving
36 Spirited tune
37 Rock full of crystals
39 Occupation
40 Snakelike swimmer
41 Facet
42 Glossy fabric
43 Horn-shaped structure
45 Paving substance
47 Milo of "The Verdict"
49 __ diem (seize the day)
51 Brown with a band
52 Burn a bit
53 Wickerwork palms
55 Foil material
56 Latex restaurant bill?
60 Unit of work
61 Cinder ending?
62 Boil
63 Driving gadget
64 Get together
65 Sketcher's need

DOWN
1 Actor Mineo
2 Top card
3 Embrace
4 Oriental nanny
5 Associated
6 Buck feature
7 Tropical fruit
8 Offer less
9 British gun
10 Knight's title
11 Put prime city in peril?
12 Songwriter Greenwich
13 Fair-haired
18 Long, long time periods
21 __ longa, vita brevis
22 More than enough
23 Misrepresent
24 Minute alteration?
26 Maugham's "Cakes and __"
28 Tiny amount
30 Citrus cooler
32 Trouble
34 Old-womanish
35 Camp quarters
37 Card game
38 Open to learning
39 __-di-dah
41 Mrs. in Madrid
42 Tracy of "Boys Town"
44 "__ the fields we go..."
45 Comic Johnson
46 Meager
47 Group of eight
48 English county
50 Facing the pitcher
53 Straight line
54 Queens ballpark
56 Dream letters
57 UFO pilots
58 Fidel's comrade
59 Plunk starter?

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

B	R	O	W	■	S	E	R	F	■	A	M	I	S	S
R	E	P	O	■	O	R	A	L	■	L	I	N	E	R
E	T	A	L	■	D	A	N	E	■	A	L	T	A	I
W	I	L	D	C	A	T	S	T	R	I	K	E	S	■
E	R	I	S	A	■	■	A	C	E	■	■	R	I	D
R	E	N	■	P	I	T	C	H	B	L	E	N	D	E
Y	S	E	R	■	R	O	K	■	■	O	A	S	E	S
■	■	■	E	D	E	N	■	R	H	O	S	■	■	■
S	C	O	N	E	■	■	M	A	H	■	T	A	G	S
T	H	R	O	W	W	E	I	G	H	T	■	S	R	O
D	I	G	■	■	V	C	R	■	■	E	A	T	I	N
■	M	A	S	Q	U	E	R	A	D	E	B	A	L	L
T	E	N	E	T	■	S	O	L	O	■	B	I	L	E
A	R	I	E	L	■	I	R	O	N	■	O	R	E	S
W	A	C	K	Y	■	S	S	T	S	■	T	E	S	S

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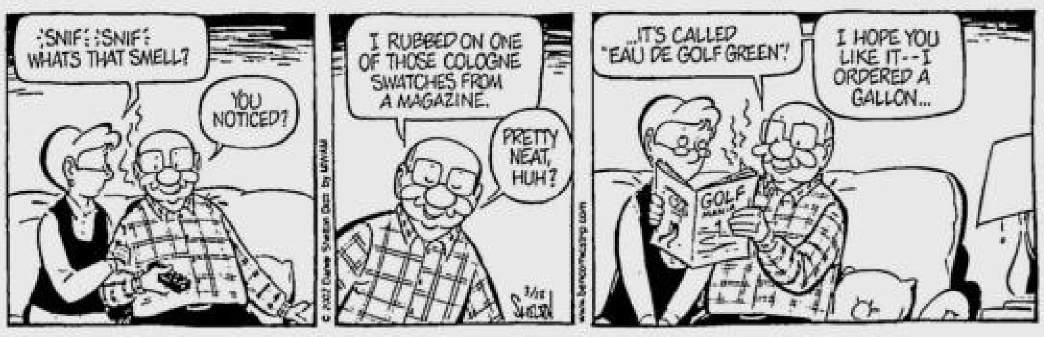
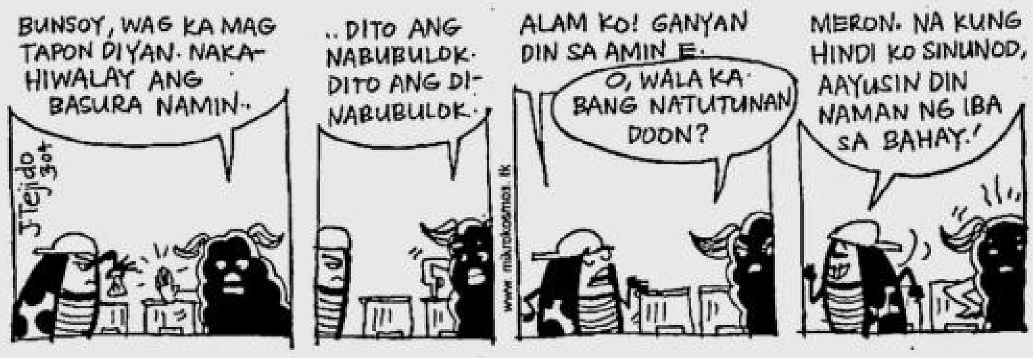
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


:SNIF: :SNIF: WHATS THAT SMELL?
YOU NOTICED?
I RUBBED ON ONE OF THOSE COLOGNE SWATCHES FROM A MAGAZINE.
PRETTY NEAT, HUH?
...IT'S CALLED "EAU DE GOLF GREEN".
I HOPE YOU LIKE IT -- I ORDERED A GALLON...
GOLF

MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO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..DITO ANG NABUBULOK. DITO ANG DI-NABUBULOK.
ALAM KO! GANYAN DIN SA AMIN E.
O, WALA KA BANG NATUTUNAN DOON?
MERON. NA KUNG HINDI KO SINUNOD, AAYUSIN DIN NAMAN NG IBA SA BAHAY.
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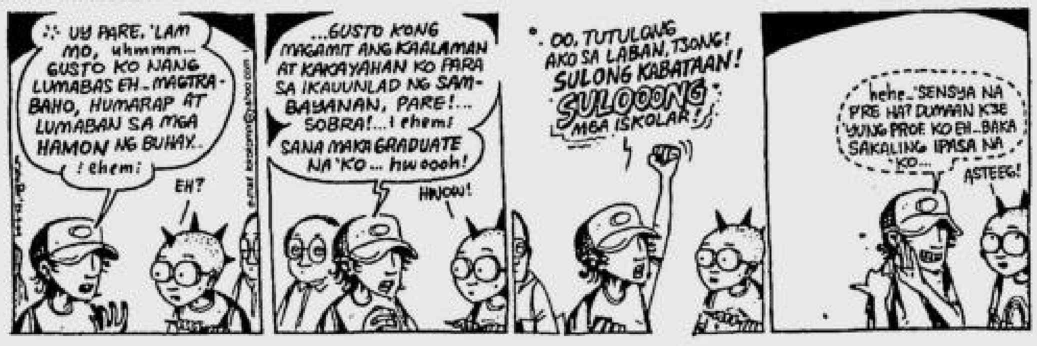
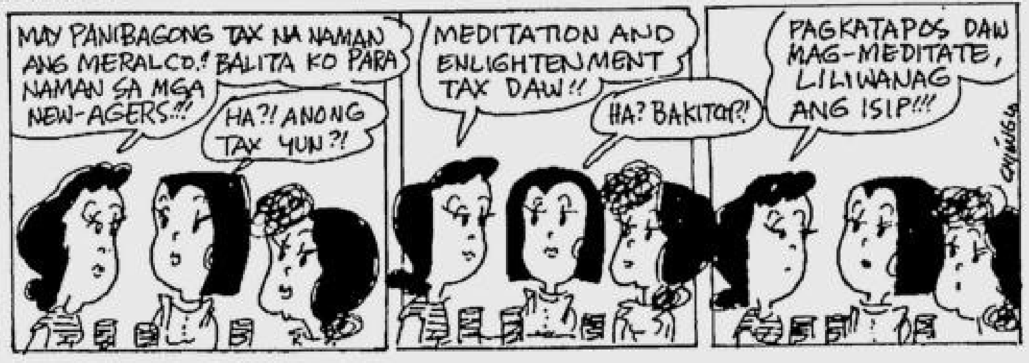
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


UY PARE, 'LAM MO, uhmmm... GUSTO KO NANG LUMABAS EH.. MAGTRABAHO, HUMARAP AT LUMABAN SA MGA HAMON NG BUHAY.. !ehem!
EH?
...GUSTO KONG MAGAMIT ANG KAALAMAN AT KAKAYAHAN KO PARA SA IKAUUNLAD NG SAMBAYANAN, PARE!... SOBRA!... !ehem! SANA MAKAGRADUATE NA 'KO... hwoooh!
HWOW!
OO, TUTULONG AKO SA LABAN, TSONG! SULONG KABATAAN! SULOOONG MGA ISKOLAR!
hehe.. SENSYA NA PRE HAT DUMAAN K3E 'YUNG PROF KO EH.. BAKA SAKALING IPASA NA 'KO...
ASTEEG!

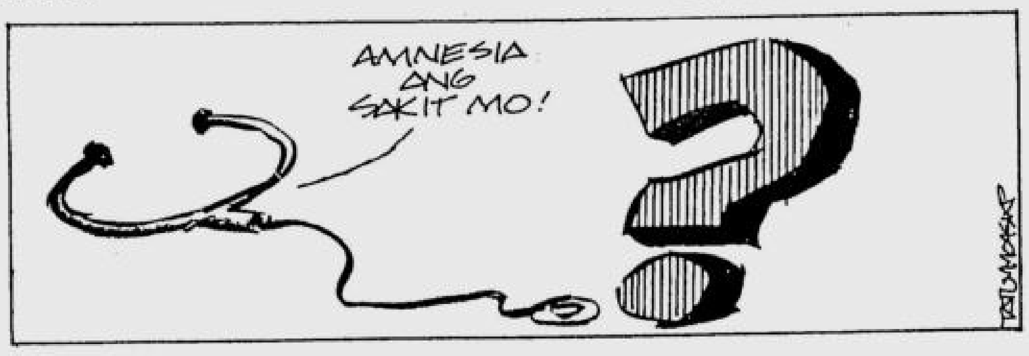
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


MAY PANIBAGONG TAX NA NAMAN ANG MERALCO! BALITA KO PARA NAMAN SA MGA NEW-AGERS!!!
HA?! ANONG TAX YUN?!
MEDITATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT TAX DAW!!
HA? BAKIT?!
PAGKATAPOS DAW MAG-MEDITATE, LILIWANAG ANG ISIP!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


AMNESIA ANG SAKIT MO!

IN THE COOL mountains of Benguet, drying the Arabica beans takes about 20 days.

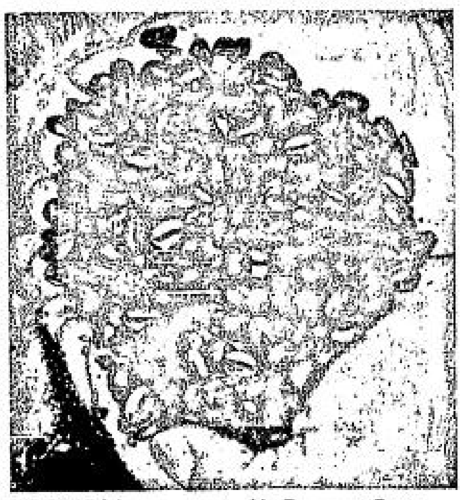
Benguet farmers are realizing the benefits of organic coffee farming, thanks to Figaro Foundation's vigorous campaign

FARM caretaker Virgie Macanes demonstrates the traditional way of hulling or peeling the beans by pounding them with a big wooden pestle.

Wake up and smell the mountain coffee

SEPARATING the chaff from the beans by winnowing in a *bilao*

THE ARABICA variety is sought by premium coffee buyers worldwide for its elegant and complex flavor. ALLISON LOPEZ



ARABICA beans roasted in Benguet State University's facility ALLISON LOPEZ

By Allison W. Lopez

HOW do you like your coffee, we asked connoisseur Chit Juan, CEO of local coffee company Figaro.

With a smile, as if imagining her morning ritual, she reveals, "I like it black, no sugar, no cream. That's how you taste if your coffee is good."

Like the grapes used to make the finest wine, quality coffee beans yield a delightful brew. And the best-tasting of the lot? Beans produced the organic way—meaning, no pesticides or chemical fertilizers whatsoever.

Unfortunately, drinking good ol' coffee done organically, or using traditional methods, may soon be unfamiliar to both coffee farmers in the highlands and consumers below. The easier, higher-yielding method nowadays is non-organic.

Which is why Juan and the Figaro Foundation Corp. are crisscrossing the mountains of Benguet to encourage farmers to rekindle their love affair with coffee the traditional way—and get more for loving it.

Labor intensive

Like hitting two birds with one stone, Juan aims to please both farmers and coffee lovers through the production of organic coffee. And little by little, she's getting results.

While organic coffee is now sold in the market at roughly the same price as non-organic ones, its labor-intensive production justifies more premium prices.

"We are willing to pay a price for good-quality coffee; so do many others, such as the traders, and consumers who only want the best coffee," says Juan.

Organic coffee is priced higher also as a reward to those small-scale farmers who practice environmentally sound farming systems and employ family and community labor. In Benguet, majority of the tribal communities practice traditional methods, which are organic in nature.

These methods consist of drying the beans under the sun, hulling or peeling the beans by pounding them with a *lusong* (a big wooden mortar and pestle); and winnowing in a *bilao* to separate the chaff from the beans.

The province is a big producer of high-grade mountain Arabica, the coffee bean variety sought by premium coffee buyers worldwide for its elegant and complex flavor. Properly processed, Arabica produced in the Cordillera highlands can very well meet the quality standards sought for by gourmet coffee enthusiasts locally and abroad, and capture premium markets such as the US, Germany and Japan.

"The biggest consumers are non-producers," says Juan. "In the Philippines, however, we are not producing enough for ourselves, so we have actually been importing coffee for years."

Next in line

Figaro Foundation hopes to replicate the success of last year's pilot farm project in Pangil, Cavite, which was planted with organic Robusta coffee intercropped with peanuts, banana and papaya on two hectares of land.

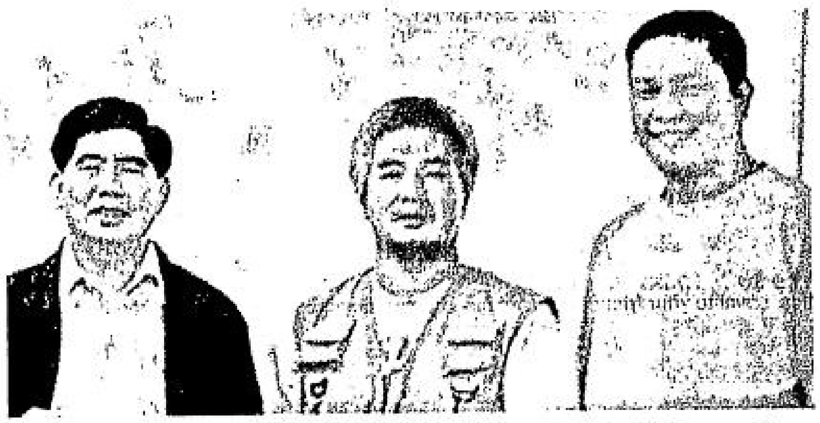
Benguet's Arabica is next in line. Arabica beans, which require soil rich in minerals, thrive at an altitude of 700-2,000 meters above sea level, making it a niche product for the Cordillera highlands.

Juan, who is also a member of the National Coffee Development Board, has inked a partnership with Dr. Rogelio Colting, president of the Benguet State University, for the project.

The Benguet State University, a center of excellence in agriculture education, has dozens of hectares at its own disposal. For the pilot farm project in BSU, Colting says the university can give Figaro Foundation more than two hectares. Juan says two is just enough, for easier monitoring.

The shade-grown method, which the BSU already employs in its farm, produces quality coffee, as the trees are shielded away from the sun's heat. The taller pine and *alnos* trees, which provide the needed protection, grow alongside the *sayote*, passion fruit and coffee trees.

This method assures a healthier ecosystem and allows farmers to rely on other crops to sustain their livelihood, since coffee is harvested only once a year. Also, organic farmland remains fertile for a decade since nutrients are not leached continually from the ground.



GOING ORGANIC. Figaro consultant Patrick Belisario (right) with Benguet State University president Dr. Rogelio Colting and professor Val Macanes

FIGARO CEO Chit Juan (right) and director Reena Francisco sitting al fresco at the Figaro SM Baguio branch ALLISON LOPEZ

Niche marketing

Juan emphasizes that though niche marketing is more concerned with quality than volume, farmers should not be afraid to give organic farming a try, as it is an economically sustainable investment.

"Buyers nowadays, especially those abroad, are looking for organic certifications. Going organic is really the way to go," she says.

Figaro has already sought organic certification to cater to changing global tastes and requirements. It's the first local coffee company to seek this recognition.

Figaro's organic farming consultant, Patrick Belisario, the former executive director of the Organic Certification Center of the Philippines, leads the foundation's quest for organic certification.

He's the first to admit that a lot more needs to be done in training and educating farmers on the benefits of organic coffee growing.

At present, coffee in this semi-temperate region is grown mostly in backyard farms, which measure, on average, only about a hectare or two. Reaching the different parts of the highlands is proving to be difficult, says BSU Prof. Valentino Macanes. But the project has made initial headway by distributing coffee seedlings to farmers.

"We're still making baby steps...," says Juan. We're really hoping to recruit new farmers and encourage the old ones to grow (Arabica) coffee again."

Big challenge

Marketing the product is also a big challenge. But Figaro will definitely be a big help in that area, says Juan. It has set its sights as well on saving and popularizing Pinoy *barako* coffee, and with its chain of coffee shops around the country, its support will certainly go a long way.

Juan's parting shot is to encourage consumers to demand more for their coffee, and be more discerning of quality beans.

"Organic coffee, aside from tasting better, has obvious health benefits. And by choosing organic coffee, we also support small-scale farmers who depend on traditional farming systems, and support ecological protection through diversification and non-use of hazardous chemical fertilizers and pesticides," she says.

Learn simple roasts, heart-friendly cooking

THE REGGIE Aspiras School of Culinary Arts has released its schedule of classes for the end of March and the beginning of April.

March 27 (Saturday)—Simple Roasts (all new): Angus Beef Belly with Tomato Ginger Jam and Mushroom Gravy, Roast Pork Belly Chinese Style with Garlic Sauce, Salt Crust Baked Poultry Platter—Chicken and Duck with sauces, soup, salad, side dishes and dessert (special class P2,000+ ingredients).

March 29 (Monday)—Reggie's Pasta Filipina 2004: Angel Hair Pasta with Tinapa Pesto, Black Pasta with Taba ng Talangka Sauce with Seared Scallops and Watercress, Mixed Longganisa with Garlic, Pepper Flakes and Truffle Pasta, Ilokos Vegetable "Primavera" with Bagoong-infused Garlic Olive Oil, Bagnet Chips and Parsley Pesto Pasta, Lamb Adobo with Quesong Puti on Penne with Baguio Tomato Sauce, Sardinas Pasta with Sundried Tomatoes

March 31 (Wednesday)—Italian 101: Minnestrone, Seafood Antipasti, Osso Buco with Risotto Milanese, Delicious Baccala Italian Style (Baccalao) with Polenta, Traditional Panna Cotta. Free wine wasting

April 2 (Friday)—Seafood 101, part 2: Learn to cook fish to perfection. Fish to be used: *lapu lapu*, creamdory, Indonesian *mahi-mahi*, Canadian flounder, sole, sea bass. Over 12 recipes from Asian to European favorites, fish heads to fish fondue side dishes

April 3 (Saturday)—Healthy Heart Cuisine (offered for the first time in the Philippines, delicious heart-friendly recipes, the basic principles of cardio cooking): Boursin Cheese with Vegetable Sticks and Crackers, Italian Vegetable Soup, Basic Green Salad with Ranch and Dijon Dressings, Crispy Baked Sole and Mahi-Mahi Fillets, Herb Marinated Roast Chicken with Baked Vegetables, Guilt-free Beef Stroganoff with Buttered Noodles, I Can't Believe It's Healthy Banana Cake

April 5 (Monday)—Baking 101, part 2: White Chocolate Banana Cream Pie, Authentic Tiramisu, Delicious Caramel Cake, Moist Peanut Butter Chocolate Cake, Lemon and Strawberry Roll with White Chocolate Butter Cream, Moist Carrot Cake with Meringue and White Truffle Cream Cheese Sauce

April 7 (Wednesday)—Sausage Making 101 (learn to make sausages the easy way): Beef, pork, mixed meat, lamb, chicken, duck and seafood. Cooking and serving techniques, sauces and side dishes

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